

Theoretical Approaches to Early Medieval Migration

Simon Justin Patrick Trafford

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Abstract

This thesis is a contribution to the ongoing debate on the effect upon culture of the movements of people. It is concerned in particular with comparing the ways in which the migrations of the early medieval period in England – the ‘Anglo-Saxon Settlements’, the ‘Viking Settlement’ and the ‘Norman Conquest’ – have been studied by antiquarians, historians, archaeologists and philologists. The topic is addressed in two ways: by a theoretical discussion of the history and development of thought on early medieval migrations in general, and by detailed case-studies of the ways in which each migration has been approached in a single English region: the county of Yorkshire.

The introduction considers the ways in which population movement has been studied by other academic discourses, and demonstrates that consideration of the subject by early medievalists is complicated by the varying, and sometimes conflicting, theoretical standpoints on migration of the three disciplines involved in early medieval study: English, History and Archaeology. The focus is then turned to the development and growth of thought on the early medieval migrations, demonstrating the very close connections between migrationist thought, historicizing on the Anglo-Saxon period and English nationalism. It is suggested that the decline of nationalist interpretations of Anglo-Saxon history since the Second World War has been instrumental in turning migration from a matter of consensus opinion into a problematised and highly divisive issue.

The case-studies consider the development of thought on the three migrations in Yorkshire during the twentieth century. In each case, a general assessment of the broad trends of each discourse serves as an introduction to detailed consideration of the way in which the attitudes of historians, philologists and archaeologists have developed during that period. Attention is also paid to the ways in which a specifically ‘Yorkshire’ perspective has developed on each migration. The thesis is completed with a brief recapitulation and summary.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is concerned with early medieval migrations and the ways in which they are studied in the English historiographical tradition. It is axiomatic that migrations have become a problematical concept for English early medievalists; no further proof is needed than the rash of contradictory publications on the subject in the last twenty years.¹ One commentator has written that Anglo-Saxonists face changing perspectives on migration with “an increasing malaise, even an ‘identity crisis’.”² The problem is not one which they can easily escape: although the question of the ‘Anglo-Saxon settlement’ has attracted the bulk of attention, population movement has been the focus of much study in virtually all parts of the early medieval period; its problematisation has implications for all early medievalists.

Wherein, exactly does this problem lie? Traditionally there are three episodes of early medieval history in which migration is said to have been of particular significance: the ‘Anglo-Saxon Settlements’, the ‘Viking Settlement’ and the ‘Norman Conquest’. There has grown up around each one of these a distinctive academic discourse, with its own particular types of evidence, its own scholars and its own history. There are, furthermore, quite significant differences in the way in which population movement has traditionally been portrayed between, on one side, the ‘Anglo-Saxon Settlements’ and the ‘Viking Settlement’, and, on the other, the ‘Norman Conquest’. The former have tended to be seen as mass migrations, involving the movement of large numbers of peasant settlers; allegedly new and intrusive elements in the society, economy and material and linguistic culture of the areas

¹ See, for instance, C.J. Arnold, *Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England* (Croom Helm: London, 1984), *idem.*, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Routledge: London, 1988), R. Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement: Archaeology and the beginnings of English society* (Duckworth: London, 1989), N.J. Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (Seaby: London, 1992), H. Hamerow, “Migration theory and the migration period”, in B. Vynner (ed.) *Building on the Past* (Royal Archaeological Institute: London, 1994), 164-77, M. Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Batsford/English Heritage: London, 1992), 11-12, D.M. Hadley, ““And they proceeded to plough and to support themselves’: The Scandinavian settlement of England”, in *Anglo-Norman Studies* 19 (1997), 69-96, *idem.*, ““Cockle amongst the wheat’: The Scandinavian settlement of England” (forthcoming).

² Hamerow, *op. cit.*, 164.

of supposed settlement have been said to be explicable only by the settlement of considerable numbers of users of the new culture and partial or total replacement of the previous population. The Norman Conquest, by contrast, has been seen as involving the movement and settlement of an élite only: although its cultural and linguistic effects have been commonly perceived to be considerable, they could be explained by the high status of the settling group relative to the rest of the population, which gave them cultural influence out of all proportion to their (relatively small) numbers.

Since the second world war, however, the ‘mass migration’ hypotheses for the Viking settlement and (more latterly) the Anglo-Saxon settlements have been challenged by a number of archaeologists and historians, who have claimed that these movements, too, were élite settlements, and that it is incorrect to equate substantial cultural change with large numbers of settlers. In proposing this they have been bitterly opposed by many other medievalists, most prominent amongst whom have been philologists and toponymists, who claim that the vast impact of the ‘Anglo-Saxons’ and the ‘Vikings’ upon the language and place-names of the areas of alleged settlement cannot be reconciled with the so-called ‘minimalist’ interpretation of settlement. Migration has thus emerged as a deeply problematised issue for early medievalists, and one which is particularly prone to causing disputes between practitioners of the three early medieval disciplines; History, Archaeology and English Studies.

This thesis sets out to describe the development of the three early medieval migration discourses, comparing and contrasting the ways in which each has responded both to changing social and political values in the Humanities as a whole, and to the shifting theoretical and methodological perspectives of historians, archaeologists and philologists. It looks also at the way in which the migration discourses have interacted with each other, both as sources of impromptu comparisons, and through the deliberate application of the techniques of one discourse to the questions of another.

Migration Studies

Before doing this, however, it is essential to place the tradition of thought on early medieval population movement within a broader context. The question of migration is by

no means the sole property of early medievalists. Indeed the vast majority of theoretical discussion of migration that has occurred has taken place entirely outside the early medieval disciplines. It has been studied not just by historians, but by archaeologists, anthropologists, sociologists, biologists, demographers, statisticians and even philosophers, each of whom have had their own particular interest in, and approach to, the subject. The word ‘migration’ has been used to describe any of a variety of purported phenomena involving the geographical movement of people. These range from the level of individuals, families or small groups, who are generally swiftly absorbed into the culture and society of their chosen destination, to mass movements which displace any existing population and replace their culture, and embracing many others between these two extremes.³ Perhaps the most striking characteristic of thought on migration is, however, its extreme antiquity.

The earliest origins of the migrationist discourse are, in one important sense, untraceable, as it predates written history itself. Migration stories are a frequent component of the mythology by which preliterate societies seek to understand and make sense of the world. By definition, of course, past examples of this are restricted, but ethnographic study of contemporary societies in which oral tradition is the sole historical paradigm, combined with what may be gathered from early written records allow some pertinent observations to be made. Such societies frequently conceive of the past as both eternal and timeless, and as substantially identical to the present.⁴ Notions of historical causality are extremely simple, and see “institutions and techniques as unitary phenomena that came into existence

³ K. Kristiansen, “Prehistoric Migrations – the case of the Single Grave and Corded Ware cultures”, in *Journal of Danish Archaeology* 8 (1991), 211-225, 219-20, T. Champion, “Migration Revived”, in *Journal of Danish Archaeology* 9 (1990), 214-218, 214. Irving Rouse calls small scale, swiftly absorbed intrusions of aliens *immigration* and reserves the term *population movement* for mass movements which “drive out the local population or else absorb it”, (*Migrations in Prehistory: Inferring population movement from cultural remains* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1986), 9). Kristian Kristiansen, by contrast, uses “population movements” as a more neutral term than “migration” to describe all sizes and types of such movement, going on to say that archaeologists are normally concerned with “movements of larger groups of people” (“Prehistoric Migrations”, 219).

⁴ J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, Wisconsin, 1985), 128.

fully fledged as they are in the present”.⁵ Thus the link between people and their culture was seen as absolute, immutable and eternal. All oral cultures have some form of creation myth explaining how things came to be;⁶ migrationism is the natural complement to this. For, as Adams, Van Gerven and Levy say: “if we accept the premise, implicit in most creation myths, that men and their cultural institutions went forth together from the hand of the creator, and that a fixed relationship between the two was ordained, then it follows that culture can move from one place to another only when and if its human carriers move from one place to another.”⁷ Association with the religious dogma of creationism ensured the transmission of migrationism to written culture, which medium sustained and nourished it and helped to reinforce its progress.

For Western thought the most significant occurrence of such a transmission was that which installed migrationist thinking in the Bible. Adams et al. note that migrationism is the only paradigm of culture change that accords with a literal interpretation of the Old Testament.⁸ With the benefit of such authority, migrationism became the natural and dominant paradigm for the explanation of culture change in mediaeval thought.⁹ It maintained this influential position, indeed, right through to the middle of the nineteenth century, when, at long last, the creationist doctrines which had sustained and reinforced it became subject to sustained questioning.¹⁰ The emergence of a non-creationist view of history, however, did not lead to an immediate rejection of migrationist ideas; in fact, migrationism seemed to gain additional scientific corroboration, with developments in linguistics, racial study and archaeology producing evidence which seemed to substantiate

⁵ Vansina, *op. cit.*, 131.

⁶ *op. cit.*, 21.

⁷ W.Y. Adams, D.P. Van Gerven, and R.S. Levy, “The retreat from migrationism”, in *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7 (1978), 483-532, 484.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ cf. S. Reynolds, “Medieval *origines gentium* and the community of the realm”, in *History* 68 (1983), 375-90, 378-80.

¹⁰ Adams et al., “Retreat from migrationism”, 484.

migrationist doctrines of a fixed link between populations and culture.¹¹

Migration Theory

The latter half of the nineteenth century saw two main developments in migrationist thought. The first of these was associated with the growing dominance of racial arguments within European nationalist discourses. Over the course of its history, migrationism developed strong links with nationalism, and it was highly suited to appropriation for racist ends. This was most explicitly stated in the emergent German state, in the works of the archaeologist Gustaf Kossinna.¹² Explicitly racist in its methodology, the aim of Kossinna's work was to establish those areas occupied by prehistoric 'Germans', in order to legitimate the expansionist territorial claims of the present-day German state. His 'normative' method involved charting prehistoric trait distributions, from which he extrapolated the existence of various archaeological *cultures*. These he equated with peoples, and changes or extensions in the distributions of the 'cultures' he had identified he explained by migrations of these peoples.¹³ Kossinna's work was profoundly influential on twentieth-century thinking on cultural change, not only for avowedly racist ideologies such as that of Nazi Germany but even in the works of the Australian Marxist V. Gordon Childe, the doyen of British prehistoric archaeology in the first half of the century.

Anthropological Migration Theory

Quite independent of these developments, and seemingly largely ignored by those concerned with the distant past, was the emergence at this time of a whole new approach to the study of migration. This was the work of demographers, geographers, and socio-

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² G. Kossinna, *Die Herkunft der Germanen: zur Methode der Siedlungsarchäologie* (Kabitzsch: Würzburg, 1911), *idem.*, *Die deutsche Ostmark: ein Heimatboden der Germanen* (Berlin, 1919), *idem.*, "Die deutsche Vorgeschichte: eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft", in *Mannus-Bibliothek* 9 (1921). See B. Arnold, "The past as propaganda: totalitarian archaeology in Nazi Germany", in *Antiquity* 64 (1990), 464-78, 464-467.

¹³ D.W. Anthony, "Migration in archaeology: The baby and the bathwater", in *American Anthropologist* 92 (1990), 895-914, 896.

cultural anthropologists, and was heralded by the appearance of E.G. Ravenstein's "Laws of Migration", published in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* in 1885 and 1889.¹⁴ At first interest in it was rather lacking, the prevailing attitude being that "migration was rather distinguished for its lawlessness than for having any definite law."¹⁵ Massive population movement in the aftermath of World War II and European decolonization, however, suddenly rendered migration a topic of pressing interest, and in the 1960s a whole new school of 'migration theory' sprang up, complete with its own journal, the *International Migration Review*.

Socio-cultural migration theory is based upon the premise that "migration can be viewed as a process that tends to develop in a broadly predictable manner once it begins"; in other words that migrations are basically all alike and comparable.¹⁶ It seeks to establish common patterns that will show the circumstances that are likely to encourage population movement, the types of people most likely to migrate and the way or ways in which movement actually occurs.¹⁷ This approach differed (and differs) from that with which historians and archaeologists are familiar; it is explicitly concerned with the very recent past (Ravenstein's original, 1885, paper was based upon data from the 1881 British Census),¹⁸ it concentrates upon individuals and families rather than larger cultural groups, and, with the notable exception of Ravenstein himself, draws a strong distinction between internal and external migration, frequently concentrating on the former.¹⁹ Modern studies too have concentrated upon the individual as the migratory unit and upon the factors influencing his or her decision to migrate. These have been characterised as 'pushes' and 'pulls', or in

¹⁴ E.G. Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration", in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 48 (1885), 167-235, and "The Laws of Migration", in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 52 (1889), 241-305. See also Anthony, "Migration in Archaeology", 898.

¹⁵ N.A. Humphreys, quoted in "Discussion on Mr. Ravenstein's Paper", in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 52 (June, 1889), 302.

¹⁶ Anthony, *op. cit.*, 896.

¹⁷ *op. cit.*, 899 ff.

¹⁸ E.S. Lee, "A theory of migration", in *Demography* 3 (1966), 47-57, 47.

¹⁹ *op. cit.*, 49.

terms of technological and resource inequality between regions.²⁰ Recent migration studies have established many broad principles of modern population movement, showing that it tends to be preceded by ‘scouts’ who relay information back about the area of destination; that migration tends to take place along well-established routes or ‘streams’ to a specific entry-point; that for every stream a counter-stream back to the place of origin tends to develop; and that migrants are generally not a random sample of the population at the place of origin, but are made up of those able and willing to overcome the difficulties of movement, normally because of either pressing negative factors such as oppression in their place of origin (‘pushes’) or overwhelming attractions and opportunities in the destination (‘pulls’).²¹

On the whole, those concerned with the more remote past have made few attempts to use these models of migration in their work. Whether because they have been unaware of them, or believed that ancient and modern migrations are too dissimilar for them to be of relevance, or simply thought that migration needed no further explanation, early medievalists and prehistorians have, until recently, almost totally failed to use modern migration theory. To be sure, many geographers and demographers themselves have discouraged the application of their theories to the pre-modern past, by espousing Zelinsky's opinion that the Industrial Revolution marked a profound change in the scale of population movement that renders modern and pre-modern migration fundamentally incomparable.²² Over the past twenty years, on the other hand, there have been many calls to apply such thinking to early medieval population movement, and a rather lesser number of attempts actually to do it.²³ Undoubtedly an awareness of sociological thought on migration can only

²⁰ Anthony, “Migration in archeology”, 899.

²¹ Lee, “A theory of migration”, 54-57.

²² W. Zelinsky, “The Hypothesis of the Mobility Transition”, in *Geographical Review* 61 (1971), 219-249.

²³ Hamerow, “Migration theory”, 174, although note her caution in suggesting the use of migration theory. C. Scull, “Approaches to material culture and social dynamics of the Migration Period of eastern England”, in J. Bintliff and H. Hamerow (eds.), *Europe Between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Recent Archaeological and Historical Research in Western and Southern Europe* (British Archaeological Reports (international series) 617: Oxford, 1995), 71-83.

benefit early medievalists, but some doubts must remain about the relevance of modern anthropological migration study; it can not, for instance, address the difficulty of recognising migration in archaeological, historical and linguistic evidence, which is a central part of the early medieval problem.

Prehistoric Migration Theory

Far closer to the concerns of early medievalists is the work that has been done on migration by prehistorians. It is in prehistoric archaeology and anthropology that migration has been used most extensively as an explanation for cultural change, and there are numerous studies of its nature and effects, although it should be noted that these are a development almost entirely of the last twenty years.²⁴

The rise and fall of the migration hypothesis in prehistoric archaeology is an important and instructive episode of intellectual history, well worthy of study in its own right. It is well-known that for much of the twentieth century, the linked processes of migration and diffusion were the dominant and unchallenged paradigms for the explanation of cultural change in prehistoric archaeology.²⁵ This school of explanation is traditionally associated with V. Gordon Childe, although it is far from clear that Childe consistently advocated migratory or diffusionist explanation, or that he distinguished systematically between the two.²⁶ Attempts were seldom, if ever, made to explain the process by which migration acted upon culture in order to change it, nor were there any systematic attempts to organise migrationist ideas into a generalised school or theory of historical explanation; migration

²⁴ Adams et al., *op. cit.*, Rouse, *Migrations in Prehistory*, Anthony, *op. cit.* (See also J. Chapman and P.M. Dolukhanov's critique of Anthony, "The baby and the bathwater: Pulling the plug on migrations" and Anthony's response, "The bath refilled: Migration in archaeology again", in *American Anthropologist* 94 (1992), 169-176), T. Champion, "Migration revived", in *Journal of Danish Archaeology* 9 (1990), 214-218, Kristiansen, "Prehistoric migrations".

²⁵ C. Renfrew and P. Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1991), 407-9, Adams et al., *op. cit.*, 484-6, Anthony, "Migration in archaeology", 896.

²⁶ Renfrew and Bahn, *op. cit.*, 409, B.G. Trigger, *Gordon Childe: Revolutions in Archaeology* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1980), 44-5, Adams et al., *op. cit.*, 493.

was simply used without further thought as the standard means of explaining change in prehistoric archaeology.²⁷

In the 1960s and 1970s however, the traditional methods and approaches of prehistorians were called into question by a new generation of young archaeologists, who were dissatisfied with the use of archaeological evidence to write 'counterfeit history', and who sought instead to analyse past cultures by understanding them as systems interacting with their natural environment²⁸. The explanation of change by migration was amongst the chief targets of 'processual', or 'New' archaeology: as the new theoretical bandwagon started to gain pace, its adherents began to question why and in what way the movement of people caused cultural change. For the first time the connection between migration and cultural change, which had always been deemed necessary and self-evident, was questioned.²⁹ Migration was portrayed as an artificial construct, developed to explain change that was spurious and conjured up by a misunderstanding of the relationship between people and culture. However the 'New Archaeologists' went further than that. Migration was not just stigmatised but anathematised. There was no place whatsoever for exogenous and unpredictable phenomena such as population movement in the 'New Archaeological' metanarrative. Migrationary explanations for change were seen as unscientific and irrelevant and banished from fashionable intellectual discussion.³⁰ This was also heavily influential on historic-period archaeologists and was the root of their growing antipathy to migrationary explanations of the early medieval period in the 1970s and 1980s.³¹

Only once the processualist tide had begun to ebb were attempts made to explore the

²⁷ Adams et al., *op. cit.*, 483.

²⁸ Renfrew and Bahn, *op. cit.*

²⁹ The New Archaeological critique of migrationist explanation was one of the central planks of its attack on traditional archaeology. See W.Y. Adams, "Invasion, Diffusion, Evolution?", in *Antiquity* 42 (1968), 194-215, L. Binford, "Some comments on Historical vs. Processual Archaeology", in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 24 (1968), G. Clark, "The invasion hypothesis in British archaeology", in *Antiquity* 40 (1966), 172-89, C. Renfrew, *Before Civilisation* (Jonathan Cape: London, 1973), *idem.*, *Problems in European Prehistory* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1979).

³⁰ Kristiansen, *op. cit.*, 211.

³¹ Hamerow, *op. cit.*, 166.

implications of the problematisation of migration. The unquestioned link between the movement of people and changes in culture had been thoroughly and effectively demolished by 'New Archaeological' thinking, but as early as 1978, Adams, Van Gerven and Levy were doughtily pointing out that techno-environmental processualists had merely replaced an explanatory paradigm that uncritically assumed the importance of migration as an engine of cultural development with one which blithely ignored it without refuting it.³² This was clearly inadequate, and it is the recognition of this fact that has paved the way for a new interest in migration amongst prehistorians, and its re-emergence in a new guise as a problematised issue for debate.

Migration and Cultural Change

Considerable common ground exists between prehistoric and proto-historic migration study. With the important exception of written evidence, they share similar sorts of data; material cultural, linguistic and skeletal. They are both interested in the same broad type of migrations, those that have left significant traces in the record (or at least have seemed to do so). This normally implies numbers above the level of single individuals or families. The movements of individuals are generally more-or-less invisible to prehistorians, and indeed they are not easily accommodated within archaeological modes of explanation. They can, of course, be discerned easily in written records, but this is not normally what is considered by historians as the study of migration. For both prehistorians and early medievalists, what is generally suggested by the word 'migration' is a movement of people sufficient to cause noticeable change in the culture of their destination.³³ In studying migration, archaeologists and historians have been most interested in the relationship between the movement of people and cultural change. However it is precisely the complexity of this relationship that has problematised the topic, and which places it in a far wider intellectual context, as part of an ongoing discourse upon explanation, that is, the attribution of meaning to past events.

That the explanation of cultural change is a fundamental of the practice of archaeology

³² Adams et al., *op. cit.*, 505. cf. Anthony, "Migration in archaeology", 895.

³³ Adams et al., *op. cit.*, 486, cf. Hamerow, *op. cit.*, 164.

and history is a thesis in need of no further re-statement.³⁴ Indeed, some form of explanation of how things came to be as they are is a universal of all known societies with any form of *historical sensibility*, that is, a degree of awareness that things have not always been as they currently are.³⁵ The practically tautological quality of the preceding sentence perhaps indicates the extent to which the attribution of cause is implicit in historicising. Nevertheless, despite the universality and generality of the *impulse* to explain change – to interpret the past – , the actual *explanations* and interpretations offered are observably myriad and represent a wide spectrum of views.³⁶ The meanings attributed to the past have varied according to the temporal and spatial position of the interpreter, between individuals, and even within the period of a single individual's lifetime. What does this mean, and specifically, what does it mean for migration?

Keith Jenkins tackles this question from a post-structuralist position by identifying the study of the past (*history*) as a discourse intimately connected with the present-day power-relations of the historian and with the legitimation of his or her identity.³⁷ The differences between interpretations are a consequence of *ideology*, rather than of method, for they represent, in Jenkins's eyes, differences in whom history is for.³⁸ The narratives that an individual constructs on the past – the meanings and explanations that the interpreter attributes to past events – are bound up with his or her reasons for studying the past, and hence with the endorsement of his or her own identity. This explains both the multiplicity of different types of explanation, and the highly polemical character of debate, for it is entirely tied up with present-day power-relations.

If history, then, is so closely connected with the legitimation of identity, what are the implications for the study of migration, which is frequently cited as a central factor in

³⁴ E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1964), 87-108, Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology*, 405, K.R. Dark, *Theoretical Archaeology* (Duckworth: London, 1995), 169.

³⁵ Dark, *op. cit.*, 170.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ K. Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (Routledge: London and New York, 1991), 26.

³⁸ Jenkins, *op. cit.*, 17-19.

cultural change and the development of national and ethnic identities? This can perhaps be best addressed by looking at the distinctions between ‘history’, that is, the discourse ostensibly about ‘the past’, and ‘the past’ itself,³⁹ and between ‘migrationism’, that is, the discourse on population movement, and ‘migration’ itself. Jenkins is implacable on the distinction between the two phenomena commonly described by the word ‘history’; the past itself, by definition, is dead, gone, and irrecoverable: “Most information about the past has never been recorded and most of the rest was evanescent”.⁴⁰ By contrast, that which historians have written about the past – historiography – is a discursive construct ostensibly concerned with the past, but which in fact is concerned with ‘traces’ of the past. This discourse does not, and can never, reconstruct or describe an objective past (as some historians have claimed) but is concerned with giving meanings to ‘traces’ of the past for the sake of the legitimation that this is reckoned to lend to present-day identities.⁴¹ Those concerned with ‘history’ (as distinct from ‘the past’) should, Jenkins opines, abandon their pretensions to being engaged in attempting to reconstruct an objective past, and acknowledge that the activity in which they are engaged is entirely interpretation, that ‘history’ and ‘historiography’ are synonymous.⁴²

It is useful to think about the distinction between ‘migration’ and ‘migrationism’ in the same way. ‘Migration’ itself, that is, the movement of population (with or without consequences for culture) is part of the past, and cannot itself be recovered or studied. The migrationist discourse, by contrast is (and always has been) an explanatory paradigm concerned with giving meaning to the ‘traces’ of population movement. It is (and always has been) entered into with the intention of legitimating present-day identities and power-relations. It is (and always has been) what is meant by ‘studying migration’.

³⁹ *op. cit.*, 6.

⁴⁰ *op. cit.*, 11 .

⁴¹ *op. cit.*, 10.

⁴² *op. cit.*, 34.

Early Medieval Migrations

As has been suggested earlier, whilst much prehistoric migration theory is relevant to the early medieval period, the research interests of prehistorians and early medievalists with regard to migration in many respects are markedly at variance. Prehistorians, whose evidence is frequently entirely archaeological in character, are interested in migrations as one amongst many alternative means of explaining distributional phenomena. Thus they tend to be concerned with finding a means of identifying occurrences of migration and distinguishing them from other explanations of intrusive distributions.⁴³ They seek, in essence, a uniform and regular archaeological correlate or correlates by which migration can be recognised. By contrast, those studying a proto-historic period, such as early medievalists, ask rather more complex questions of migration, as befits the character of their data. They are generally not so much concerned with establishing the *fact* of population movement as in understanding the scale and character of population movements that they already believe to have occurred on the grounds of written evidence. As the narrative sources themselves are rarely particularly informative about the nature of the migrations, medievalists have attempted to use other types of evidence to fill out and complete their understanding. Legal documents, archaeology and linguistics have all been enlisted in attempting to chart the changes which the various migrations were said to have brought about. However, it is in the correlation of these different types of sources that very many of the disputes that have arisen over migration between early medievalists lie.

In this thesis it is my contention that many of the problems that early medievalists have with migration are all their own, and cannot simply be solved by the application of models drawn from other discourses or disciplines. They are the product of the history of study of the early medieval period in this country, and are perpetuated by the continuing structure of early medieval research. Throughout its history, the whole conception of what early medieval study is about has been deeply bound up with thought on national origins, and hence with migration. The early medieval discourse that has emerged as a result is marked by certain distinctive characteristics. It has, in some ways, a remarkable degree of unity,

⁴³ Rouse, *Migrations in Prehistory*, passim. This is, on the other hand, criticised by Anthony as one of the “wrong questions” (Anthony, “Migration in Archaeology”, 897.

with the assumption that in some way it represents a distinct cultural epoch. It has tended to be seen as a formative phase in English history, the period in which the English people and the English nation were formed. It is, in short, shot through with nationalism.

Since the end of the second world war, and increasingly since the 1960s, there have been attempts to alter the orientation of the discourse, and these have had notable successes. Certainly, the overt nationalism which characterised early medieval study before the second world war has been curtailed, and researchers are far more willing to adopt less insular and Anglocentric perspectives to the history of Britain. Nevertheless there is much in the structure of the discourse that has been too heavily entrenched to change and which perpetuates older ways of thinking. The disciplinarily-fragmented nature of the discourse is partly responsible for this; whilst some disciplines have almost rid themselves of old nationalist agendas, others continue to fight the old battles.

Of course, the changing character of early medieval study does not just affect the way in which migration is perceived, but many other topics. However, because of the closeness of its association with the old nationalist orthodoxy it is migration that has become most heavily problematised in recent years.

The Structure of the Thesis

The treatment of migrations by English early medievalists is examined here in two ways: firstly at a general level, and secondly through three case-studies, to show how treatment of the migrations has differed at a local level. Particular emphasis is laid on comparison of the treatment of the migration episodes. As is to be expected, they show both similarities and differences. In addition, however, there is a very marked tendency to interpret each of them in the light of the others; effectively this comparison has served as a sort of impromptu migration theory. It has had profound influence on the way in which migrations are seen.

There have been a respectable number of previous studies on the historiography of

individual migrations.⁴⁴ By placing migratory study in its historical, social and political context, they have shown how each migration has been appropriated for contemporary political (normally nationalist) ends. However, concentration upon one migration means that they have to some extent ignored the broader perspective on migrations which has been shared by all early medievalists.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to examining these broad trends. It starts with a discussion of the nature of the early medieval discourse in this country, asserting simultaneously its unity and the divisions within it consequent upon disciplinary study. The history and aims of the discourse are discussed, and the effects of disciplinary specialization. In particular the chapter explores the very substantial increase in complexity in treatment of migration that has occurred during the twentieth century. This is largely a result of a widening in the types of evidence used to shed light upon the nature of migration, and the development of three separate disciplinary approaches to population movement; those of archaeologists, philologists and documentary historians respectively.

Chapters 3-5 are predicated upon the belief that the best way to compare the differing characters of the three migration discourses is by detailed study of a localised area which experienced all three, and for which a tradition of migration study has developed. These chapters are therefore dedicated to case studies on the study of each of the three migration episodes in the county of Yorkshire, early medieval Deira. In each case, the broad development of thought on population movement is examined, before going onto in-depth examinations of the arguments that have been applied by historians, philologists and archaeologists.

⁴⁴ C. Hill, "The Norman Yoke", in C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (Secker and Warburg: London, 1958), 50-122, D.C. Douglas, *The Norman Conquest and British Historians* (Jackson, Son & Co: Glasgow, 1946), N.J. Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (Seaby: London, 1992), 1-16, S.J. Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire* (Unpub. PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1995), 9-40. There is, as yet, no detailed consideration of the historiography of the Viking settlement, although see C. Fell, "Norse Studies: Then, now and hereafter", in A. Faulkes and R. Perkins (eds.) *Viking Revaluations: Proceedings of the Viking Society Centenary Symposium 14-15 May 1992* (Viking Society for Northern Research: London, 1993), 85-99, for some brief views of the development of thought on the Vikings.

The thesis is completed by a discussion of what has been learnt, drawing comparisons between all three migration discourses and synthesising the results of the general study and the case-studies.

Early Medieval Yorkshire

Yorkshire, England's largest county, has been chosen as the study area first and foremost because there are lengthy and active historiographical traditions dedicated to understanding the impact upon it of all three major migration episodes; Anglo-Saxon, Danish and Norman. The location and character of the county have made it simultaneously both vulnerable to invasion and attractive to settlers.⁴⁵ It has a long eastern coast, and is easily accessible from the North Sea via the river Humber and its tributaries, which allow waterborne penetration far inland. On the other hand, the Humber, the Pennines and the North York Moors all to some extent curtail terrestrial access, and define the county's southern, western and northern boundaries. Within this area are a range of terrains, ranging from the uplands of the Dales and the Moors to the wetlands of the Humberhead Levels and the Hull valley. The larger part of Yorkshire consists of poor quality land; moors or mountainous upland.⁴⁶ In between the areas of high land, however, are the Vales of York and Pickering; relatively low-lying plain, with a good climate, reasonable soils and immense agricultural potential, although parts of them were liable to flooding until large-scale drainage took place.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the eastern parts of the county are, in many respects, the most productive and attractive area of the north of England, and perhaps the north of Britain as a whole.

The unit of Yorkshire in its present form as a shire county emerged at some unknown

⁴⁵ W.E. Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North: the Region and its Transformation, 1100-1135* (Croom Helm: London, 1979), 9.

⁴⁶ M.L. Faull, *British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire* (Unpub. PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1979), 6.

⁴⁷ Kapelle, *op. cit.*, 7-9, Faull, *op. cit.*, 8.

date, probably in the eleventh century; it is first explicitly named thus only in 1065.⁴⁸ The shire, however, probably corresponds to the tenth century Viking kingdom of York. In its extent it was prefigured by the kingdom and province of Deira, a region whose origins are, to say the least, shadowy, but which seems to have had its centre at York. As a whole, the history of Yorkshire in the Early Medieval period is rather poorly known, largely because few early written records from the area have survived.

This did not, however, prevent the early establishment of a tradition of study of the county in the early medieval period. Its origins can be traced to the seventeenth century, with copying of the Yorkshire Domesday text, and histories of the city of York by Widdrington and, later, by Drake.⁴⁹ In the nineteenth century, local historical and archaeological study started to take off in Yorkshire, as in the rest of England, with publication of a number of general histories of the county, extensive barrow-digging, and (later in the century) the establishment of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.⁵⁰ However it is only really in 1912 that a proper appreciation of the early medieval history of the county became possible, for in that year was published the second volume of Page's *Victoria County History* for Yorkshire which contained 3 papers of immense importance; R.A. Smith's account of the early Anglo-Saxon antiquities of the county, W.G. Collingwood's description of its sculptured stone and William Farrer's text and introduction to the Yorkshire

⁴⁸ F.R. Thorn, "Hundreds and wapentakes", in A. Williams and G.H. Martin (eds.) *The Yorkshire Domesday* (Alecto: London, 1992), 39-70, 40.

⁴⁹ T. Widdrington, *Analecta Eboracensia* (ed. Caesar Caine) (London, 1897)(Widdrington wrote c. 1660), F. Drake, *Eboracum* (London, 1736), E.M. Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1986), 214.

⁵⁰ The first county history was T. Allen, *A New and Complete History of the County of York* (3 vols.) (I.T. Hinton: London, 1828-31). See P. Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship: Yorkshire, 1066-1154* (CUP: Cambridge, 1994), 16 and J. Biggins, *Historians of York* (Borthwick Papers, no. 10)(Borthwick Institute of Historical Research: York, 1956). On early archaeological research in the county, see S.J. Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire (ASCEY)* (Unpub. Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1995), 55-57, W. Greenwell and G. Rolleston, *British Barrows* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1877), J.R. Mortimer, *Forty Years Researches in British and Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire* (A. Brown & Sons: London, 1905).

Domesday.⁵¹ This, however, was merely the start of a period of dramatic advance in the availability of materials for Yorkshire's early history. From 1913 onwards Farrer edited the first three of a series of volumes of *Early Yorkshire Charters*, a monumental work of reference, completed by Sir Charles Clay with another nine volumes between 1935 and 1965.⁵² Meanwhile, between 1928 and 1962, A.H. Smith was publishing the Yorkshire volumes in the English Place-Name Society survey of England. It is rather unfortunate that those for the North (1928) and East (1937) Ridings were amongst the first to be completed for the society and lack some of the detailed information that was later to become standard, but that for the West Riding, published in seven volumes in 1962, is very comprehensive.⁵³

More recently Yorkshire has benefited from a number of surveys on each of the three migrations. In the late 1970s Faull and Eagles produced separate but complementary studies of the Anglo-Saxon settlements, which have recently been modified by Lucy.⁵⁴ Viking activity has been evaluated by Alfred P. Smyth and by Dawn Hadley, whilst the Norman conquest of the Yorkshire has been dealt with by W.E. Kapelle and, more recently, Paul Dalton.⁵⁵ To add to these, Nicholas Higham has recently published a single volume history of the kingdom of Northumbria, which, although not dealing specifically with the county, contains much information relevant to it, and is probably the only work available that deals

⁵¹ W. Page (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of York* (vol. 2) (Constable and Co. Ltd: London, 1912).

⁵² Dalton, *op. cit.*, 14, W. Farrer and C.T. Clay (eds.) *Early Yorkshire Charters* (Yorkshire Archaeological Society Records Series: 1913-1965).

⁵³ A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire* (English Place-Name Society Volume 5)(CUP: Cambridge, 1928), *idem.*, *The Place-Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York* (EPNS Vol. 14)(CUP: Cambridge, 1937), *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire* (7 vols.)(EPNS Vols. 30-36)(CUP: Cambridge, 1962).

⁵⁴ M.L. Faull, "British survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria", in L. Laing (ed.) *Studies in Celtic Survival* (BAR bs 37) (BAR: Oxford, 1977), 1-56, *idem.*, *British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire* (Unpub. PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1979), B.N. Eagles, *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside* (BAR bs 68) (BAR: Oxford, 1979), Lucy, *ASCEY*.

⁵⁵ A.P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1977), *idem.*, *Scandinavian York and Dublin* (2 vols.)(Tiernan Press: Dublin, 1975 and 1979), Hadley, "And they proceeded to plough...", Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship*.

synthetically with all three migrations from a non-southern perspective.⁵⁶

Yorkshire also retains an abiding sense of identity, probably the strongest of all English counties, which seems likely to have affected interpretation of migrations. Special attention is paid in the case-studies to the way in which a categorically northern or Yorkshire perspective has emerged as a significant feature in debate, breaking down to some extent the traditional sweeping national picture of English history.

⁵⁶ N.J. Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria A.D. 350-1100* (Allan Sutton: Stroud, 1993).

Chapter 2: Early Medieval Migration

Introduction

Having viewed the broad context of migration in the wider world, the focus is now narrowed to look specifically at the way in which migration is treated by English early medievalists.

Early Medieval History and the European Tradition

European history is awash with ‘periods’ and ‘ages’. From all regions and all parts of history, named epochs abound; the “New Stone Age”, “Classical” Greece, the “Vendelstid”, the “Renaissance”, the “Age of Capital”. Such terms enter into book titles, the names of university courses, and the very ways in which historians think about their topics of study. Indeed, bitter experience has shown that historians have often placed too much faith in the historical reality of what can never be more than subjective and judgement-laden short-cuts for thinking.¹ Nevertheless, periodicity, with some reason, remains the principle means by which thought about the past is ordered and structured.

In the European tradition, one division of the past has commanded more respect and usage than all others; that is, the tripartite distinction of Classical Antiquity, Medieval and Modern. From its coining during the Renaissance by the Italian historian Flavio Biondo, the concept of the *Medium Aevum* separating the ancient and the modern worlds, has entered, in one form or another, the thought and the languages of all of Europe.² In recent times, of course, such thinking has been subject to sustained criticism; it raises important – and unanswered – questions about exactly what is meant by “antique”, “medieval” and “modern”, to say nothing of the eternally vexed question of when and how to date the

¹ See the critique by Oscar Halecki in *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (Sheed and Ward: London, 1950), 145-182.

² D. Hay, “Flavio Biondo and the Middle Ages”, in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 45 (1959), 97-128, F.C. Robinson, “Medieval, the Middle Ages”, in *Speculum* 59/4 (1984), 745-56, 745-49.

transitions between each. Few recent historians of the fifteenth century, for instance, have avoided the temptation to cock a snook at the notion that, at some given point or other, the populace of Europe went to bed lost in the mysticism of the middle ages and awoke as citizens of the brave new modern world.³ The problem is all the more acute for the dating of the transition between Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages, obscured by a highly defective written record, which has oscillated through several *centuries* between the death of Theodosius in 395 and the Moslem expansion in the seventh and eighth centuries.⁴

This, however, is a modern problem. To historians from the Renaissance to the present century, there was no doubt that the end of the ancient world occurred with the collapse of the Roman empire in the West under the impact of barbarian invasion and migration in the fifth century. Firm and absolute barriers separated Classical archaeologists and historians and their Medievalist counterparts, reinforced, to some degree by mutual distaste for the other's subject.⁵ The migrations were alleged to have ushered in a dark age (another common, and ill-defined, term) that saw considerable political, cultural and ethnic flux, from which eventually emerged (by approximately the tenth century) the nations and states of the "central middle ages". The term '*Völkerwanderungszeit*' or 'Migration Period' was coined to describe the unstable societies of the fifth and sixth centuries, although one recent authority has suggested that there is a case for extending the term to include the Moslems, the Vikings, the Hungarians and even the Mongol incursions in the thirteenth century.⁶ In any case, the principle had been established of a division within the middle ages. The early part is characterised as a period of instability, and is frequently saddled with pejorative names such as "dark ages" or "barbarian". "Early medieval", which is used here for the period, carries as many, if not more, assumptions and associations as do these, but it is at least free from their explicitly negative terminology.

³ For example, C.S.L. Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism 1450-1558* (Hart-Davis, MacGibbon: London, 1976), 11-12. See also Halecki, *op. cit.*, 149-50.

⁴ Robinson, *op. cit.*, 749.

⁵ R. Hodges and D. Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe: Archaeology and the Pirenne thesis* (Duckworth: London, 1983), 3.

⁶ L. Musset, *The Germanic Invasions: the Making of Europe AD 400-600* (Paul Elek: London, 1975) (Engl. trans. of *Les Invasions: Les Vagues Germaniques* (Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, 1965)), 4.

From Pirenne onwards, European historians have reconsidered the gulf between the Ancient and Mediaeval worlds, recognizing the continuity of religion, society and culture throughout the third to eighth centuries, and de-emphasizing the cataclysmic *Sturm und Drang* aspects of change. The walls dividing Classical and Medieval historians and archaeologists have come down to some extent, although these distinctions still exist and exert an influence. Conversely, there has been a trend towards further subdivision of the “Middle Ages”. Historians have focused attention on a number of renaissances, in the twelfth century, the tenth century or the Carolingian period, which have suggested further sub-divisions and turning-points within the broad medieval period.⁷ The upshot of all this has been a drastic growth in number and complexity of medieval periods. According to the particular historian concerned, the early Medieval or *Frühmittelalter* in Europe is 300-1000,⁸ *From Constantine to Saint Louis*,⁹ from Constantine to Gregory VII,¹⁰ 400-900,¹¹ or any of a host of other alternatives. Besides this, the historian is faced with the notion of Late Antiquity,¹² of *haut moyen age* and *bas moyen age*,¹³ or of the first millennium as a meaningful historical unit.¹⁴ There are, furthermore, differences in periodisation along national and regional lines. In Scandinavia, where the first millennium is almost entirely prehistoric, the whole period is considered in archaeological terminology, as the late Iron Age, with divisions into the Roman Iron Age, Germanic Iron Age and Viking Age. In

⁷ Robinson, *op. cit.*, 751.

⁸ R. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe, 300-1000* (Macmillan: London, 1991).

⁹ R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe, from Constantine to St. Louis* (2nd edn.)(Longmans: London, 1988).

¹⁰ The dates covered by the journal *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* as laid down in the founding issue in 1968 (K. Hauck, “Das Frühmittelalter-Kolloquium vom 28.-30. April 1966 in Münster/W.”, in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1968), 1-2, 1).

¹¹ G. Holmes, “Editor's Foreword”, in G. Holmes (ed.) *The Oxford History of Medieval Europe* (OUP: Oxford, 1992), v-x, v.

¹² As popularised by P.R.L. Brown. See his *The World of Late Antiquity, from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1971).

¹³ Robinson, *op. cit.*, 751.

¹⁴ K. Randsborg, *The First Millennium AD in Europe and the Mediterranean: an archaeological essay* (CUP: Cambridge, 1991).

France and Germany the divisions made are related to historically-known ruling houses: Merovingian, Carolingian, Capetian, Ottonian. In England, as will be seen below, rather different conditions have prevailed.

To sum up, the idea of the early middle ages in Europe has changed, roughly over the course of the twentieth century, from an accepted norm of European historiography, strongly associated with migrationist thinking, and with clear ramifications for the way in which scholarship was practised, to a point at issue. Some sort of concept of the early middle ages as a defined period still exists, and is the justification for such journals as *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* or *Early Medieval Europe*, but it is a fluid, subjective and negotiable concept, subject to redefinition according to regional and topical context.

Anglo-Saxonism

English early medieval historiography displays both similarities and contrasts with the broader European discourse. In this country, the early medieval period is still conventionally treated as a unit, with fairly firm and widely acknowledged starting and finishing points. It starts with the withdrawal of the Roman legions and the settlements of the English amidst the obscurity of the fifth century, and concludes with 1066 and the Norman Conquest. The epoch defined by these two horizons is universally (though arbitrarily) known as the “Anglo-Saxon” period, and the idea of “Anglo-Saxon” reaches into all aspects of thought about the early medieval English past. Its students are frequently termed “Anglo-Saxonists”. The books they write, and the courses they teach, are on “Anglo-Saxon England”, the “Anglo-Saxon period” or even simply “the Anglo-Saxons”. The main English-language journal devoted to the early medieval period is *Anglo-Saxon England* and is affiliated with the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists. Everywhere the phrase is repeated and reified. It has even entered cyberspace; the most active internet discussion list for the period is called Ansax-L.

Its ubiquity as a chronological, cultural and ethnic description is so entrenched and widely-observed that its value judgements and implications are rarely noticed, but it is

salutary to consider what is implied by use of the phrase “Anglo-Saxon”.¹⁵ It imposes unity on seven centuries of human development that saw enormous changes in virtually every field of life in Britain; culture, economy, society and religion. It encourages an *a priori* belief in breaks of continuity at its beginning and end that should more properly be the subject of discussion.¹⁶ Furthermore it forces on the inhabitants of lowland Britain a name which they do not seem to have chosen for themselves: the term itself appears only in the ninth century, and is first used on the Continent; from the eighth century, the term used by those living in ‘England’ to describe themselves was the one that stuck: *Angli* or English.¹⁷ When and why, then, did “Anglo-Saxon” come into general use?

The answer is tied up with the history of early medieval study and with the peculiarly strong fascination with the period that has been part of the mental furniture of educated English culture since the sixteenth century, a phenomenon that has come to be known as “Anglo-Saxonism”, “Teutonism” or “Germanism”. The origins and development of Anglo-Saxonism have become very familiar, for they are of interest not only to early medievalists, but also to those interested in the history of ideas in the modern period and in the development of historical method.¹⁸ As historians have become increasingly interested in the historical subjectivity of their own thought, and in the uses to which the past is put, the Whig and nationalist evocation of English origins has been subjected to increasing scrutiny. Indeed, contemplation of the wrong-headedness of Anglo-Saxonism is almost as much of a cliché of the navel-gazing historiography of the late twentieth century as Anglo-Saxonism itself was of the patriotic historicizing of the nineteenth. It has, however, made it quite easy to trace the development of nationalist interpretations of the English early medieval past from their origins through their nineteenth-century zenith to their decline and retreat in the present century. It is my contention that, throughout this long history, particular ideas about

¹⁵ See S. Reynolds, “What do we mean by “Anglo-Saxon” and “Anglo-Saxons”?”, in *Journal of British Studies* 24(4) (1985), 395-414.

¹⁶ *op. cit.*, 399.

¹⁷ *op. cit.*, 398.

¹⁸ There is a considerable literature on the subject. See Hill, “The Norman Yoke”, J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian historians and the English past* (CUP: Cambridge, 1981), H.A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons and Anglo-Saxons* (Harvest House: Montreal, 1982).

migration have been the natural concomitant of a nationalist viewpoint on the English early medieval past.

The Birth of Anglo-Saxonism

The origins of the migration topos in English historiography lie in the early medieval period itself; arguably the explanation of English origins by the migration was the founding characteristic of the whole English historical tradition. It must be viewed, however, in the context of a large body of similar ideas which were to be found in other parts of Europe in the early medieval period. “Myths of origin,” according to Hugh MacDougall, “enable people to locate themselves in time and space. They offer an explanation of the unknown and hallowed traditions by linking them to heroic events and personages of the distant past. In addition, they form the ground for belief systems or ideologies which, providing a moral validation for attitudes and activities, bind men together into a society.”¹⁹ From the sixth century onwards there survive a variety of written accounts of the origins of the peoples of the barbarian successor-states, the result of clerics trying “to make sense of the contemporary world in the light of classical and Christian learning.”²⁰ There are several types, associating peoples respectively with Scandinavian/Tacitean, biblical or classical (normally Trojan) origin, but there are broad similarities between them all, and they are all shared between all of the varying peoples of western Europe.²¹ They are, of course, all migratory, for, as has been shown in Chapter One, this was the only paradigm of cultural change available. They are concerned “with collectivities which generally corresponded to political units of the time when the stories gained currency but which were extremely unlikely to have had a single common descent.” This, it is argued, is because the main purpose of such myths was to legitimate unity and to foster *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* (feeling of togetherness).²² There are further formulae which seem to recur frequently; foundations are frequently attributed to kinsmen (normally of divine descent) who travelled

¹⁹ MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 1.

²⁰ Susan Reynolds, “Medieval *Origines Gentium* and the community of the realm”, in *History* 68 (1983), 375-90, 375.

²¹ Reynolds, *op. cit.*, 375-7.

²² *op. cit.*, 378.

in pairs and in small numbers of ships (Hengest and Horsa, Cerdic and Cynric, Raus and Raptus).²³ Such formulae do not, of course, inspire confidence that any one of the recorded myths is founded upon oral traditions of genuine events rather than merely observing tropes. Nevertheless this need not imply that the clerical writers were divorced in their concern for these matters from the (to us) mute laity; the origin/migration myths should be seen as uniting high and low within society.²⁴

Interestingly, the first written appearance of the migration myth of the English was not in an origin myth, nor even in a document written by an Englishman, but in the *De Excidio Britanniae* of the British monk Gildas.²⁵ Gildas, of course, is a much-discussed source and the details of the story are extremely well-known to modern historians. Essentially it recounts the wickedness and impiety of the Britons, and their divine punishment through the medium of the English, who, arriving in three boats as a defensive force at the request of a British *tyrannus*, eventually overthrew their employers and seized power for themselves. It is this story, together with embellishments, that Bede retold in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Nicholas Howe has recently charted the progress of the myth from these beginnings to its place as a norm in the self-image of the lettered English.²⁶ It had a number of fundamental elements. Firstly, it was strongly related to sin and to divine retribution. It was the impiety of the inhabitants of Britain that had caused the coming of the Anglo-Saxons as the scourge of God. Secondly, and thanks to their usage in this way, the idea emerged that “the Anglo-Saxons were a chosen people to whom a promised land had been entrusted by virtue of their migration”.²⁷ This in turn entailed the third element of the myth, an identification of the

²³ B. Yorke, “Fact or fiction? The written evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries AD”, in *ASSAH* 6 (1993), 45-50, 46.

²⁴ Reynolds, “Medieval *Origines Gentium*”, 378.

²⁵ Patrick Sims-Williams has suggested that Gildas might himself have been drawing upon English sources, judging by his description of the three *cyulas* (keels) of the English (“Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons”, in *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 6 (1983), 1-30, 22-3). See also David Dumville's speculations on the point in the Discussion on Julian Richards's paper in G. Ausenda (ed.), *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians* (Woodbridge, 1995), 66-74, 72.

²⁶ N. Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1989).

²⁷ *op. cit.*, 180.

English with the Israelites of Exodus; each had moved “from a place of spiritual bondage across the water to a land of spiritual salvation.”²⁸ The English could be portrayed, like the Israelites, as God's chosen people, living in the land set aside for them, the island of Britain.

With the blending of migration, religion and ethnicity the myth was extremely potent; it flourished together with the “English” identity it legitimated. It became a norm of English thought to which Alcuin, Wulfstan, the *Chronicle* writers or the author of *Beowulf* could all allude in passing with complete confidence that it would be understood.²⁹ Just as much as in the modern period, the myth of English origins was malleable and could be appropriated to serve the needs of the political moment. When, in the eighth-tenth centuries, the Christian inhabitants of Britain were confronted by a seaborne heathen threat to their tenure, in the shape of the Vikings, the resonances with Gildas were obvious. Alcuin and Wulfstan invoked the familiar migration myth in admonition of the English to repent of their sins as the Britons had not done: “the myth becomes a cautionary tale: God's will, as contained in history, can repeat itself, and a new migrant people can win the island from its sinful inhabitants.”³⁰

Such thinking was applied to the Vikings, but it would be still more relevant to the more profound crisis of Englishness that followed the Norman Conquest. It has been said that “the greatest advances in the study and understanding of Anglo-Saxon history made before the nineteenth century were those of the twelfth.”³¹ The English historians of the period struggling to make sense of the changes and challenges to their culture that the conquest brought about, would have recourse once again to the model established by Bede and echoed by Wulfstan and Alcuin; the sinful inhabitants of Britain had brought punishment

²⁸ *op. cit.*, 179.

²⁹ *op. cit.*, 10.

³⁰ *op. cit.*, 180.

³¹ J. Campbell, “Some twelfth-century views of the Anglo-Saxon past”, in *Peritia* 3 (1984), 131-50, repr. in J. Campbell (ed.) *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (Hambleton Press: London, 1986) 209-228, 209.

upon themselves once more at the hands of a seaborne invader.³² Indeed, in the hands of William of Malmesbury, Orderic Vitalis, Henry of Huntingdon, Florence of Worcester or Simeon of Durham, this perspective could be brought to its summation. They created a picture of Anglo-Saxon history expressed in implicitly migratory terms; its opening created by a blessed migration and its closure by an equally divinely-sanctioned conquest. They are the first to imbue c.450-1066 with its feeling of completeness, and it is in their works as well as in Bede that such a framework of early medieval English history would be available to those who came after them.³³

They stood, however, at the end of the first period of the tradition, for the new conditions of the Anglo-Norman state with its blending of cultures and its aspirations to hegemony throughout Britain prompted a redefinition of insular identity and the rise to prominence of a new historical paradigm. Around 1136 Geoffrey of Monmouth produced his *History of the Kings of Britain* which articulated an alternative insular origin myth.³⁴ It saw the origins of the inhabitants of Britain in the migration to the island of refugees from the sack of Troy under the leadership of Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas.³⁵ It was only passingly concerned with the Saxons, who appeared largely as barbarous enemies for the myth's chief hero, King Arthur, to beat. It was a myth more suited to Norman needs, connecting the origins of the English with the European classical tradition, asserting the antiquity of the rule of the *whole* of Britain from London, and little concerned with sin.³⁶ Perhaps most importantly it avoided any notion of the English as God's chosen. It had considerable appeal for the new Anglo-Norman elite, and it swiftly became accepted as the most popular British origin myth and an important part of royal propaganda, although the

³² R.I. Page, 'A Most Vile People': *Early English Historians on the Vikings* (University College London/ Viking Society for Northern Research: London, 1987), 14-15, P. Wormald, "Engla Lond: the making of an allegiance", in *Journal of Historical Sociology* 7 (1994), 1-24, 17.

³³ R.W. Southern, "Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 4. The sense of the past", in *TRHS* (5th ser.), 23 (1973), 243-263.

³⁴ MacDougall, *Racial Myth*, 7.

³⁵ *op. cit.*, 1.

³⁶ Wormald, "Engla Lond", 17.

Bedan version of English history was never quite rooted out entirely.³⁷ It is interesting however to note that it was *English* identity that survived (by, to say the least, obscure processes), the Brutus myth of Britishness being grafted incongruously onto it by the thirteenth century.³⁸ The success of the Anglo-Saxon migration myth's ability to instill *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* may be judged by the way that English identity survived even when the myth itself had been supplanted.

The dominance which the Brutus myth enjoyed in explanations of English origins during the middle ages does not represent any fundamentally different type of historiography. It was a mere substitution of a migration myth that enjoyed political favour for another that did not. The fundamental purpose of both was the same; the legitimation and strengthening of feelings of group identity. It needed, therefore, no substantial conceptual change, but merely a change in the political climate, for the process to be reversed.

Modern Anglo-Saxon Study

Patrick Wormald suggests that the sixteenth century “saw the rebirth of many of the circumstances of the tenth. In each era, English allegiance was fused by adherence to a special Church and soldered by fear of its godless enemy.”³⁹ The impetus for a rebirth of interest in the Anglo-Saxon past came with Henry VIII's break with Rome in the 1530s. Scholars such as John Foxe, Matthew Parker and John Leyland began to reassess their history and to seek patriotic, insular alternatives to the European and papal perspectives that were the basis of the Brutus story and its accretions.⁴⁰ They were greatly aided by the break-up of the monasteries and their libraries, which freed many ancient documents,

³⁷ MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 11-16, Campbell, “Some twelfth-century views”, 221. See also Wormald, “*Engla Lond*”, 18.

³⁸ Reynolds, “*Medieval Origines Gentium*”, 377, Wormald, *op. cit.*, 17-18.

³⁹ Wormald, *op. cit.*, 17-18.

⁴⁰ MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 31-2.

including the works of Bede and the Anglo-Norman historians, to secular scholars.⁴¹ Therein was a story highly suited to their ends. In the pre-Norman church the Reformation scholars found (or at least claimed that they had found) an institution to their liking, which retained the spiritual purity of the primitive church.⁴² Stronger links to Rome and ecclesiastical corruption, it was suggested, had crept in with the papally-sanctioned Norman conquest, and ensuing co-operation with the reviled Hildebrandine papacy.⁴³ In recruiting the Anglo-Saxons to their cause, they also took on board many aspects of the nationalist myth, which frequently were not dissimilar to their own beliefs; a notion of the English as God's Chosen People has had enduring appeal to English historians.

Important principles in the treatment of English early medieval history were thus established (or re-established) at this time. The period was seen as a unit, defined by two episodes of population movement, the Anglo-Saxon settlement and the Norman Conquest. It was, indeed, in the sixteenth century that the name 'Anglo-Saxon' was first generally used to distinguish the language and people of pre-Norman England from those of later times.⁴⁴ These 'Anglo-Saxons' were increasingly lionised and the effects of the Norman Conquest reviled. The Anglo-Saxon myth, established first by Bede and stated in its entirety by the twelfth-century historians, had displayed what one critic has called its "protean durability", and was once again an active part of English historiography.⁴⁵

As the pressing religious concerns of the sixteenth century eased to some extent under the early Stuarts, their place as the most important issue of the day was taken by political and constitutional controversy. This brought no slackening of interest in the Anglo-Saxons. Indeed, the early medieval past was swiftly re-appropriated to serve the newly emerging political ends. In the run-up to the English civil war, antiquarian speculation on the Anglo-Saxon past became closely associated with the parliamentary opponents of the usage of

⁴¹ J.R. Hale, *The Evolution of British Historiography From Bacon to Namier* (Macmillan: London, 1967), 11.

⁴² MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 34 ff.

⁴³ Hill, "The Norman Yoke", 60, MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 37.

⁴⁴ Reynolds, "What do we mean by "Anglo-Saxon"?", 398.

⁴⁵ Wormald, "*Engla Lond*", 17.

royal prerogative. These men saw themselves as defending ancient Anglo-Saxon liberties, seeing parliament's authority as anterior and superior to that of kings; its origins, they suggested, could be traced through study of Anglo-Saxon records to the ancient *witenagemot* and thence to the *conventus* of Tacitus.⁴⁶ This formed the basis of what came to be known as the theory of the “Norman Yoke”. Christopher Hill has summarised it concisely:⁴⁷

Before 1066 the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of this country lived as free and equal citizens, governing themselves through representative institutions. The Norman Conquest deprived them of this liberty, and established the tyranny of an alien King and landlords. But the people did not forget the rights they had lost. They fought continuously to recover them, with varying success. Concessions (Magna Carta, for instance) were from time to time extorted from their rulers, and always the tradition of lost Anglo-Saxon freedom was a stimulus to ever more insistent demands upon the successors of the Norman usurpers.

In keeping with the spirit of the times, the emphasis was firmly upon institutions and upon the question of constitutional continuity. Nevertheless, part of the strength of the doctrine lay in its appeal to patriotism. The Anglo-Saxon inheritance was being taken into the ideological underpinning of the identity of the English.⁴⁸

With parliamentary victory in the civil war came a new imperative; for men of property to defend their position against lower-class radicals.⁴⁹ The conservative Parliamentarians regrouped around a common Whiggish political ideology, designed to safeguard what had been won, to guard against radical attack and to pretend that there had been no Revolution.⁵⁰ This had its corollary in Anglo-Saxon studies: a new development (or perhaps a new emphasis) of the Anglo-Saxon myth claimed that in fact Anglo-Saxon liberties in large order had survived the Norman Conquest, as embodied in the common law; it was only in

⁴⁶ Lucy, *ASCEY*, 13, MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 56.

⁴⁷ Hill, *op. cit.*, 57.

⁴⁸ Hill, *op. cit.*, 67, Lucy, *ASCEY*, 14.

⁴⁹ *ASCEY*, 14.

⁵⁰ Hill, *op. cit.*, 91.

the imposition of a foreign king that they had been suppressed. However, with victory in the Civil War, it was argued, the repressive institutions of English monarchy had been destroyed and liberty had been restored.⁵¹

As a fundamental feature of Whiggish and patriotic thought in the years after 1688-9, the Anglo-Saxon myth came to have universal and practically unquestioned acceptance as historical dogma.⁵² The eighteenth century was, however, a period of mixed fortunes for Anglo-Saxon study. Many of the men and women of the Enlightenment were repelled by the seeming barbarity of the early medieval period and turned their historical interests in the direction of classical antiquity.⁵³ The Norman Yoke dropped out of political debate, and, as the century progressed, radicals increasingly based their demands for change on appeals to Reason rather than to Anglo-Saxon precedent.⁵⁴ Earlier in the century, both Defoe and Swift had scoffed at the notions of English superiority and predisposition to freedom.⁵⁵ These, however, were the reactions of an awkward and atypical minority against a consensus so broad as to be virtually unchallengeable. Writers as diverse as Hume, Gibbon, Montesquieu and Catherine Macaulay cited with approval the Germanic love of liberty and representative institutions, drawing upon both Tacitus and the ideology surrounding the Norman Yoke.⁵⁶ Enthusiasm for Germanic origins even crossed the Atlantic; in 1776, Jefferson proposed that one side of the Great Seal of the United States should represent “Hengest and Horsa, the Saxon chiefs from whom we claim the honor of being descended,

⁵¹ *op. cit.*, 87-8.

⁵² MacDougall, *Racial Myth*, 81, Lucy, *op. cit.*, 14.

⁵³ J.M. Levine, *Humanism and History: Origins of modern English historiography* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1987), 96.

⁵⁴ Hill, “Norman Yoke”, 90, A. Briggs, “Saxons, Normans and Victorians”, in A. Briggs, *Collected Essays of Asa Briggs* vol. 2 (Harvester Press: Brighton, 1985), 215-235, 218.

⁵⁵ D. Defoe, *The True-Born Englishman* (1701), *idem.*, *Jure Divino* (Book 9) (1706), J. Swift, *A Discourse of the Contests and Dissentions Between the Nobles and the Commons in Athens and Rome* (Oxford, 1701). See MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 75-77.

⁵⁶ MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 81-83, R. Horsman, “Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850”, in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (1976), 387-410, 389-90, Briggs, “Saxons, Normans and Victorians”, 217.

and whose political principles and form of government we have assumed.”⁵⁷

Alongside all this amateur interest, this period saw the establishment of institutionalised study of Anglo-Saxon culture, with Rawlinson's endowment of a lectureship at Oxford in 1750.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the progress of Anglo-Saxon historical study into academia was slow. Right up to the closing years of the nineteenth century there were flourishing traditions of early medieval study entirely without the universities. Specialisation remained uncommon throughout this early period, with scholars prepared to take an interest in a varied and generalised range of subjects.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close there was a quickening of interest in the distinctive qualities of the English character and constitution, an interest intensified by wars with France, and, towards the end of the century, by reactions to the French Revolution.⁵⁹ The stage was set for Anglo-Saxonism's greatest age.

Victorians and Anglo-Saxons

In the nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxon scholarship made enormous advances as new types of evidence started to be used and their study passed away from amateur antiquarians and increasingly came under the control of professional specialists working within universities. It also saw a new stage in the development of Anglo-Saxonism. Racist and nationalist elements had been part of the Anglo-Saxon myth since at least the seventeenth century, but they had always been subordinate to the main thrust of the doctrine, which was concerned with constitutional liberties and institutions. From the late eighteenth and

⁵⁷ J.P. Boyd (ed.) *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1: 1760-1776 (Princeton, 1950), 495. On Jefferson as an Anglo-Saxonist, see S.R. Hauer, “Thomas Jefferson and the Anglo-Saxon Language”, in *PMLA* 98 (1983), 879-98, and M.D. Peterson (ed.) *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (The Library of America: New York, 1984). On the general effect of Anglo-Saxonist constitutional thought on pre-revolutionary America, see H.T. Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1965).

⁵⁸ H.M. Chadwick, *The Study of Anglo-Saxon* (W. Heffer and Sons: Cambridge, 1955) (2nd edn: 1st edn., 1941), 45

⁵⁹ Lucy, *ASCEY*, 18, Hill, *op. cit.*, 94.

nineteenth centuries, however, it was precisely the nationalist and racist elements of the myth that were emphasized.⁶⁰ It is instructive to compare Christopher Hill's definition of the Anglo-Saxon myth in the seventeenth century (quoted above) with the elements identified by Hugh MacDougall in the nineteenth-century version of the myth:⁶¹

1. Germanic peoples, on account of their unmixed origins and universal civilizing mission, are inherently superior to all others, both in individual character and in their institutions.

2. The English are, in the main, of Germanic origin, and their history begins with the landing of Hengist and Horsa at Ebbsfield, Kent, in 449.

3. The qualities which render English political and religious institutions the freest in the world are an inheritance from Germanic forefathers.

4. The English, better than any other Germanic people, represent the traditional genius of their ancestors and thereby carry a special burden of leadership in the world community.

The first work to capture the new mood was Sharon Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*.⁶² In some ways the first work of the Germanist school, it allied a Romantic affection for Old English language and literature with an overwhelming belief in the superiority of the English by virtue of their Germanic origins.⁶³ Interestingly, though, it saw the Norman Conquest as essentially of benefit to England, by admitting it to common European developments.⁶⁴ Catching the flood of the Romantic movement, it was well-received and influential, turning the attention of scholars and reading public alike to the Anglo-Saxon age, and passing through seven editions by the middle of the century.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ See R. Horsman, "Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism", 390.

⁶¹ MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 2.

⁶² S. Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans: London, 1799-1805).

⁶³ D.A. White, "Changing views of the *Adventus Saxonum* in nineteenth and twentieth century scholarship", in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971), 585-594, 586, MacDougall, *Racial Myth*, 94.

⁶⁴ Turner, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, 418, Briggs, "Saxons, Normans and Victorians", 220-1.

⁶⁵ MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 92-4.

Turner was the pioneer, but the true doyen of early Victorian Anglo-Saxon study was indubitably J.M. Kemble. He was probably the first historian of the Anglo-Saxons to possess any degree of technical training for his tasks, and he was undoubtedly remarkable in uniting expertise in philology, history and archaeology.⁶⁶ These skills and ideas were mainly a consequence of the time he spent in Germany under the brothers Grimm, and it is as a link between Germany and England at a crucial stage in the development of philology and history that his greatest importance lies.⁶⁷ Germanic philology led the world in the early nineteenth century, especially after the publication in 1819 of the first part of Jakob Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik*.⁶⁸ Although Grimm was undoubtedly the most important, many German scholars had taken up Herder's belief in language as the basis of nationality and engaged in research upon the historic greatness of German. In particular they sought to trace the origins and development of the Indo-European or Aryan languages, a search which took on an increasingly clear racial character. Clear equations were made between language and race; indeed, throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, philologists were writing histories of the spread and dispersion of a single racial group, that spread out from an original homeland in the Steppes, re-invigorating Europe and bringing with it its distinctive culture and language⁶⁹. It was the work of Kemble and his rival Benjamin Thorpe to integrate the established insular tradition of Anglo-Saxonism into the full flow of this European philological and racial thinking. From the 1830s their works introduced scholars in England to German philology; although controversial at first, it gradually gained ground, especially after the publication in 1849 of Kemble's *Saxons in England*.⁷⁰ Philology was a

⁶⁶ White, *op. cit.*, 586. For biographies of Kemble and appreciations of his work, especially in philology, see B. Dickins, "John Mitchell Kemble and Old English Scholarship", in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25 (1939), 51-84, and R.A. Wiley, "Anglo-Saxon Kemble: The Life and Works of John Mitchell Kemble 1807-57, Philologist, Historian, Archaeologist", in *ASSAH* 1 (BAR bs 72) (Oxford, 1979), 165-273.

⁶⁷ E.G. Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (D.S. Brewer: Cambridge, 1975), 28.

⁶⁸ J. Grimm, *Deutsche Grammatik* (Dietrich: Göttingen, 1819-1837).

⁶⁹ Horsman, "Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism", 392.

⁷⁰ J.M. Kemble, *The Saxons in England* (2 vols.) (Longman: London, 1849). On the controversy over the 'new philology', see Wiley, *op. cit.*, 197-204, and H. Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* (Minnesota University Press: Minneapolis, 1983)(2nd edn: 1st edn., Princeton, 1967).

flourishing subject throughout the nineteenth century, and for much of it was the main focus of research on the Anglo-Saxons conducted in universities.

Although Kemble's first interest was in philology, true to the all-embracing spirit of Grimm and the Germans he extended his interests in his later writings to cover practically all areas of Anglo-Saxon culture.⁷¹ He virtually founded the field of Old English onomastics, with papers on both personal- and place-names,⁷² published his *Codex Diplomaticus*, a compilation of some 1500 documents from Ethelbert to the Norman Conquest, and, in *The Saxons in England*, wrote the work which would replace Turner as the standard history of the period.⁷³ He was, on the other hand (and now famously), sceptical about the early written sources for the Anglo-Saxon settlement; this allowed him considerably more freedom in his (maximalist Germanist) account of the settlement and may perhaps have turned him towards archaeological evidence.⁷⁴ Certainly it was he who, in 1856, first directly compared burial urns from England and from Germany, and thereby established the central plank of the archaeological study of early medieval migrations; “we can henceforth use indifferently the discoveries of Englishmen and North Germans for the elucidation of our national treasures.”⁷⁵

⁷¹ Wiley, “Anglo-Saxon Kemble”, 222 ff.

⁷² J.M. Kemble, *On the Names, Surnames and Nicknames of the Anglo-Saxons* (Longman: London, 1846), *idem.*, “On a peculiar use of the Anglo-Saxon patronymical termination ING”, in *Proceedings of the Philological Society* 4 (1848), 1-10. See also F.M. Stenton, “The historical bearing of place-name studies: Anglo-Saxon heathenism”, in *TRHS* (4th ser.) 23 (1941), 1-24, repr. in D.M. Stenton (ed.), *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1970), 281-97, 282.

⁷³ White, *op. cit.*, 586.

⁷⁴ There has been frequent (and sometimes incautious) modern quotation of Kemble's statement: “I confess that the more I examine this question, the more completely I am convinced that the received accounts of our migrations, our subsequent fortunes and ultimate settlement, are devoid of historical truth in every detail” (*Saxons in England*, I, 16): White, *op. cit.*, 586, P. Sims-Williams, “The settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*”, in *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983), 1-41, R. Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement: Archaeology and the beginnings of English society* (Duckworth: London, 1989), 10.

⁷⁵ J.M. Kemble, “On mortuary urns found at Stade-on-the-Elbe and other parts of Germany”, in *Archaeologia* 36 (1855), 270-83. The quotation is from *idem.*, *Horae Ferales: or Studies in the Archaeology of the Northern Nations* (R.G. Latham and A.W.

Kemble's contribution to Anglo-Saxon studies was thus immense. He had given it a new direction, and laid the foundations for new types of study which would come into their own in the twentieth century. In the shorter term, however, one of his most significant roles was as inspiration to the historians of the so-called 'Oxford School': E.A. Freeman, J.R. Green and William Stubbs.⁷⁶ Indeed, Stubbs called him "my pattern scholar".⁷⁷

In numerous publications between the 1860s and 1880s the historians of the Oxford School constructed and popularised a patriotic version of early English history as a grand and heroic epic.⁷⁸ Anglo-Saxon (and hence English) history had begun, according to this, with the migrations in the third-fifth centuries, which established the English race and English law, language, customs and institutions in Britain. The Conversion followed, but the Christianity of England and its historic national destiny were threatened by the Danish incursions from the ninth century onwards. These were resisted by King Alfred (a particular hero) who restored English fortunes and set in train the 'reconquest' of the Danelaw, which led to the achievement of English unity. This, however, was only to be enjoyed for a limited time for, although the Danish conquest of 1016 proved short-lived, the Anglo-Saxon period was closed by the Norman Conquest in 1066.

Alongside the political narrative was another story, however; the peopling of England.

Franks, eds.) (Lovell, Reeve and Co: London, 1863), 230. See also Wiley, *op. cit.*, 236-242, Lucy, *op. cit.*, 25.

⁷⁶ Briggs, *op. cit.*, 221.

⁷⁷ W. Stubbs, letter of 8 December 1859, printed in W.H. Hutton (ed.) *Letters of William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford* (Archibald Constable: London, 1904), 77.

⁷⁸ The Oxford School historians were all extremely prolific:
E.A. Freeman: *The History of the Norman Conquest of England: its causes and its results* (6 vols.)(Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1870-1879), *The Growth of the English Constitution* (Macmillan: London, 1872), *The Historical Geography of Europe* (Macmillan: London, 1881), *Fifty Years of European History: Teutonic Conquest in Gaul and Britain* (Macmillan: London, 1888).

J.R. Green: *A Short History of the English People* (Macmillan: London, 1874), *The Making of England* (Macmillan: London, 1881), *The Conquest of England* (London, 1883).

W. Stubbs: *Select Charters and other illustrations of English constitutional history from the earliest times to the reign of Edward the First* (Oxford University Press: London, 1870), *The Constitutional History of England* (OUP: Oxford, 1874-8) .

According to this view, England at the beginning of the early medieval period was an empty land; the Romano-British population was seen as never having been large, and having had its numbers drastically cut by war and pestilence in the fifth century. Forest, it was thought, covered much of the country; indeed it was against the trees as much as against the Britons that the English fought in their struggle to expand.⁷⁹ During the early medieval period, it was suggested, successive waves of invaders had gradually filled this country, starting with the best and most easily-accessible land, and gradually filling up every available niche. The process had advanced far by the time of *Domesday Book* (1086) but was by no means complete. Even then there remained areas of unexploited wilderness, which were only brought into cultivation by internal colonization in the central middle ages. Such a schema had important implications for migrationist thought; a small native population, of course, would require only a small number of migrants to overwhelm it, thus avoiding some of the awkward logistical questions implied by a movement of many hundreds of thousands. Perhaps even more importantly, it made repeated migrations seem the necessary and desirable means to the great end of an England peopled by the English. With such arguments on its side and very little evidence to tell against it, the broad picture of an empty land gradually being filled by migrants has proved exceedingly tenacious. It was virtually unchallenged up to the Second World War, and, even after aerial photography and the new discipline of settlement history forced a drastic upwards re-evaluation of the Roman and Romano-British populations, continued to be highly influential.⁸⁰

Racial Interpretations and Ethnology

The most important feature of Oxford School Anglo-Saxonism is its total and explicit belief in English racial superiority. The works of Freeman, Stubbs and Green are panegyrics to the stout manly virtues of the 'Anglo-Saxons', virtues which were both an explanation of nineteenth century English greatness and a justification for the further extension of

⁷⁹ Burrow, *A Liberal Descent* ??? e.g. Green, *Short History*, 10.

⁸⁰ See P.H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (Methuen: London, 1978), 132-3, N.Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (Seaby: London, 1992), 8-9.

English influence around the world.⁸¹ Such ideas were a routine part of the rampant English nationalism of the mid-Victorian period and associated with contemporary hostility towards ‘Celts’, who were seen as feminine and wayward in character.

The racial interpretation of English history imposed particular demands upon the Anglo-Saxon period; in particular, the purity of the English race in its early stages had to be asserted. Firstly this meant a very great emphasis upon migrations, and, above all, the ‘Anglo-Saxon settlement’, as these were the points at which racial stocks could blend and change. Therefore these were the keys to historical development: “It is with the landing of Hengest and his war-band at Ebbsfleet on the shores of the Isle of Thanet that English history begins. No spot in Britain can be so sacred to Englishmen as that which first felt the tread of English feet.”⁸² Secondly it meant that the migrations had to be seen in a particular way: the Britons had to be exterminated beneath the onslaught of the English invaders. The Vikings, on the other hand, could safely be removed from the racial equation of early medieval England, for in truth they were of the same stock as the English: “The secret of this difference between the two invasions [English and Viking] was that the battle was no longer between men of different races. It was no longer a fight between Briton and German, between Englishman and Welshman. The Danes were the same people in blood and speech with the people they attacked; they were in fact Englishmen bringing back to an England that had forgotten its origins the barbaric England of its pirate forefathers. Nowhere over Europe was the fight so fierce, because nowhere else were the combatants men of one blood and one speech. But just for this reason the fusion of the Northmen with their foes was nowhere so peaceful and so complete.”⁸³ The Normans too were of more constitutional significance than racial; they were seen as few in numbers and of uniformly elevated social status; unlikely to make any significant difference to the stock of England. Nevertheless, the fact of the migration, of the influx of people, however small, was significant in itself. Thereafter, to quote Sellars and Yeatman, “The Norman Conquest was a Good Thing, as

⁸¹ ASCEY, 21, L.P. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A study of anti-Irish prejudice in Victorian England* (Conference on British Studies: Bridgeport, Conn., 1968), 12, Hill, “The Norman Yoke”, 115.

⁸² Green, *Short History*, 7.

⁸³ *op. cit.*, 42.

from this time onwards England stopped being conquered and thus was able to become top nation.”⁸⁴

At the same time as the Oxford School historians were interpreting the early history of England in such explicitly racial terms, others were seeking to relate culture directly to evolutionary biology.⁸⁵ The joint sciences of ethnology and anthropology were founded in the eighteenth century with the aim of classifying men on the grounds of biological difference. In the nineteenth century, ethnological classification by a whole range of phenotypical characteristics – hair colour, skin colour, stature and the size and shape of many different bones – became commonplace, as did relating these characteristic to temperament and intellectual calibre.⁸⁶ Skull measurements, or craniometry, were particularly common, and became a standard analytical tool of archaeologists. No cemetery excavation was complete in the latter half of the century without establishing whether those buried were dolichocephalic (the long-headed, Teutonic, type) or brachycephalic (broad headed, allegedly typical of ‘Celts’). The ethnologist J.H. Beddoe even claimed to be able to discern the racial mixing that had occurred in different areas of Britain by examination of the present-day population.⁸⁷ By the end of the century, however, criticism of these approaches was starting to make itself felt, and the influence of the ethnologists and craniometrists subsided.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, even as late as 1935 standard histories of the Anglo-Saxons were being written that made extensive use of Beddoe's ethnology.⁸⁹

University Study and the New Learning

⁸⁴ W.C. Sellars and R.Y. Yeatman, *1066 and All That* (Methuen: London, 1930), 17.

⁸⁵ MacDougall, *Racial Myth*, 121-2.

⁸⁶ *op. cit.*, 122.

⁸⁷ J. Beddoe, *The Races of Britain* (London, 1885), J. Beddoe and J.H. Rowe, “The ethnology of West Yorkshire”, in *YAJ* 19 (1907), 31-60.

⁸⁸ MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 124.

⁸⁹ R.H. Hodgkin, *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (2 vols.)(Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1935), vol 1, 172-3. Hodgkin did, admittedly, express some doubts as the validity of Beddoe's claims, but these were based only on the 1300 year gap between the migration and the survey, not on the basic principles of ethnological study.

The appointment of Stubbs as professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1866 represents one of the first stages of the professionalization of history and its move into the universities.⁹⁰ Previously, study had been entirely in the hands of amateur antiquarians (drawn largely from the middle and upper classes) who were normally generalists, with some expertise in a range of fields. Close social and intellectual links associated antiquarians, historians and archaeologists.⁹¹ However, from the 1850s on, and particularly with the reforms of the universities by the Liberal governments in that decade and the 1870s, the early medieval discourse was transformed, and gulfs were opened up between the disciplines.⁹² As history gradually succeeded in its struggle to gain recognition as a legitimate subject of study, its practitioners distanced themselves both from the methods of antiquarians and from the study of language.⁹³ Divisions thus grew up between the study of historical and legal documents and philology within the universities and between both of these and medieval archaeology, which remained largely outside the universities until the twentieth century. The familiar structure of early medieval study in the twentieth century was being put into place.

Stubbs, “the most careful and conscientious of nineteenth-century historians”, was the first holder of the Oxford chair to have had any historical training; thereafter it would become essential.⁹⁴ With the new professionalism came a more critical attitude and a tendency to fight shy of the sweeping generalisations that had characterised earlier visions of English history.⁹⁵ Repeated attacks on the extremism of mid-century Anglo-Saxonism encouraged even ardent Germanists such as Freeman and Stubbs to concede the mongrel

⁹⁰ Briggs, “Saxons, Normans and Victorians”, 277.

⁹¹ P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986), passim, esp. 26 ff.

⁹² *op. cit.*, 2.

⁹³ *op. cit.*, 23 ff., 135 ff., Chadwick, *Study of Anglo-Saxon*, 45 ff.

⁹⁴ MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 102.

⁹⁵ *ASCEY*, 23.

origins of the English to some extent in their later works.⁹⁶ The first seeds of doubt had been sown which would eventually lead to the downfall of racial Anglo-Saxonism in the twentieth century. On the other hand, it is of immense significance for the further development of the discipline of early medieval history that its founding father was Stubbs; it was his nationalist thought which was institutionalized in the emergent university research and teaching structures and which would be the basic guide to Anglo-Saxon history for generations of historians to come.⁹⁷

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, early medieval study saw a significant change in personnel and a revolution in standards as university study and disciplinary specialisation began to bear fruit. The enthusiastic amateurs who had been the mainstay of the subject at the beginning of the century were now entirely replaced by professional historians conducting research in depth and publishing the results in a new forum, the *English Historical Review*, founded in 1886. In a few years after 1890, a mass of work was done on the 'crucial' texts of Anglo-Saxon history which laid the foundations for all study since: Earle and Plummer's edition of the *Chronicle*, (1892-9), Plummer's *Bede* (1896), Vinogradoff's *Villainage in England* (1892), Round's *Feudal England* (1895), Maitland's *Domesday Book and Beyond* (1897) and Stevenson's *Asser* (1904).⁹⁸ Outside England, German and Scandinavian scholars continued to take an intense interest, with Mommsen's

⁹⁶ *ibid.* For criticisms of Germanism: T. Nicholas, *The Pedigree of the English People* (Longmans: London, 1868), L.O. Pike, *The English and Their Origin* (London, 1866), C.H. Pearson, *History of England During the Early and Middle Ages* (Bell and Daldy: London, 1867), G. Allen, "Are we Englishmen?", in *Fortnightly Review* 28 (1880), 472-81, J.F. Palmer, "The Saxon invasion and its influence on our character as a race", in *TRHS* (n.s.) 2, 173-96.

⁹⁷ Briggs, "Saxons, Normans and Victorians", 228.

⁹⁸ J. Earle and C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles parallel; with supplementary extracts from the others* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1892-9), C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, historiam abbatum, epistolam ad Ecgberctum una cum historia abbatum auctore anonymo; ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum denuo recognovit commentario tam critico quam historico instruxit Carolus Plummer* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1896), P. Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England* (London, 1892), J.H. Round, *Feudal England: Historical Studies on the XIth and XIIth Centuries* (London, 1895), F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond: three essays in the early history of England* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1897), W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Asser's Life of King Alfred, and the Annals of Saint Neots* (London, 1904).

editions of Gildas and Nennius in 1894, Liebermann's *Ueber ostenglische Geschichtsquellen* (1892), and, more importantly, the early volumes of his *Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (1903-16).⁹⁹

Advances in Anglo-Saxon scholarship were not, by any means, restricted to the emerging discipline of history; the decades on each side of the year 1900 were just as fundamental to the development of Old English language study. Developments were made in a number of areas which massively broadened the scope of the subject. The publication in 1890 of Bradley's edition of Stratmann's *Middle English Dictionary* at last made possible detailed study of the Scandinavian element in the English vocabulary; Erik Björkman published the founding work of this field, *Scandinavian Loan-words in Middle English* in 1900, before turning his attention to Scandinavian personal names in England.¹⁰⁰ Björkman's work in turn was incorporated into Otto Jespersen's *Growth and Structure of the English Language* which itself became the model for all histories of the English language up to at least the 1980s.¹⁰¹

Besides the new esteem for the Scandinavian influence in English the other major philological development of the turn of the century was the appearance of systematic studies of place-names. Although the fundamental principles of place-name study had been set out by Bradley and Stevenson in the 1880s and 1890s, the first systematic county survey was

⁹⁹ T Mommsen (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi* 13, part 1 (1894), F. Lieberman, *Ueber ostenglische Geschichtsquellen* (Hannover, 1892), *idem.* *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Max Niemeyer: Halle, 1903-16), See F.M. Stenton, "Early English History, 1895-1920", in *TRHS* (4th ser.) 28 (1946), 7-19 (repr. in D.M. Stenton (ed.) *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1970), 346-356), 347.

¹⁰⁰ E. Björkman, *Scandinavian Loan-words in Middle English* (2 vols.) (Max Niemeyer: Halle, 1900, 1902), *idem.*, *Nordische Personennamen in England* (Max Niemeyer: Halle, 1910), *idem.*, *Zur englische Namenkunde* (Max Niemeyer: Halle, 1912), Stenton, *op. cit.*, 354.

¹⁰¹ O. Jespersen, *Growth and Structure of the English Language* (Teubner: Leipzig, 1905). See M. Barnes, "Norse in the British Isles", in A. Faulkes and R. Perkins (eds.) *Viking Revaluations* (Viking Society Centenary Symposium 14-15 May 1992) (Viking Society for Northern Research: London, 1993), 67.

W.W. Skeat's *Place-Names of Cambridgeshire* (1901).¹⁰² It was rapidly emulated as interest in place-names burgeoned, and by 1924, the year of the foundation of the English Place-Name Society, many counties had at least some sort of coverage. As place-name study came to have a firmer footing it was applied to the question of migration, where it seemed to confirm the established historical frameworks. The vast majority of the place-names of England were English, the next largest group being Scandinavian. British names were uncommon, although more numerous in the north and west.¹⁰³ It was an implicit assumption that the distribution and character of these names could show something about the nature of migrations, and the relations of native and newcomer. Thus Eilaart Ekwall in the *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names*: “A study of British place-names will have among its chief aims the establishment of the extent to which a British population survived after the Anglo-Saxon conquest, the relation between Britons and Saxons after that event, and similar problems.” Elsewhere in the same volume, he says that “the evidence of place-names has been adduced ... to enable us to form an opinion on the nature of the settlements, their geographical extent, the approximate proportion of Scandinavians to the English in the various districts, and the like.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, almost from its inception as an academic study, place-name study was associated with migrations.

Early medieval archaeology remained largely outside the universities until the second half of the twentieth century, but the decades after 1900 nevertheless saw a considerable increase in its prestige and visibility. Considerable work had been done in the nineteenth century on early Anglo-Saxon graves, but it was sometimes obscure and received comparatively little attention from the new historical mainstream. As late as the 1900s it was seen as “outside the perspective of the general historian.”¹⁰⁵ R.A. Smith contributed a series of articles on Anglo-Saxon antiquities to the *Victoria History of the Counties of*

¹⁰² W.W. Skeat, *The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire* (Deighton, Bell: Cambridge, 1901). See Stenton, *op. cit.*, 356.

¹⁰³ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁴ E. Ekwall, “The Celtic Element”, in A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton (eds.) *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names* part 1 (EPNS vol. 1) (1924), 15-35, 17, “The Scandinavian Element”, in Mawer and Stenton (eds.), *op. cit.*, 55-92, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Stenton, *op. cit.*, 355.

England from 1900, but it was only with the publication of the first volumes of G. Baldwin Brown's *Arts in Early England* that the material became available in a coherent, easily-digestible form.¹⁰⁶ In its full published form, this was a complete survey of the archaeology, architecture and art of the whole of the early medieval period in England, the first attempt to portray Anglo-Saxon material culture as a coherent whole, in the manner so familiar with Anglo-Saxon written history.¹⁰⁷ It was, however, the early period, and in particular the 'Anglo-Saxon settlement', that received most attention from the early twentieth-century archaeologists, although the art and architecture of the later period did receive important attention from art historians.¹⁰⁸

For migration study, the new learning of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought profound changes. Firstly, it was only at this time that organized study of the effects of the Viking settlement began to be undertaken. Before this time, although the Scandinavian influence upon English history had never been forgotten or ignored – the Vikings had provided excellent pagan foils for the heroism of King Alfred – it had counted for very little in traditional interpretations.¹⁰⁹ The Danes had neither invented nor subverted the English constitution, nor, according to pan-Germanist orthodoxy, had they done anything other than reinforce the Englishness of the English race, and hence they had never

¹⁰⁶ G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England* (Murray: London, vols I-II: 1903, III-IV: 1915, V: 1921, VI.i: 1925, VI.ii: 1937).

¹⁰⁷ T.M. Dickinson, "Anglo-Saxon Archaeology: Twenty-Five Years On", in D.A. Hinton (ed.) *25 Years of Medieval Archaeology* (Department of Prehistory and Archaeology, Sheffield University: Sheffield, 1983), 33-43, 33.

¹⁰⁸ The principle early twentieth century works on the early Anglo-Saxon period are N. Åberg, *The Anglo-Saxons in England during the Early Centuries after the Invasion* (Uppsala, 1926), T.D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to 900 A.D.* (London, 1938), E.T. Leeds, *The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1913), *idem.*, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology* (Oxford, 1936), R.G. Collingwood and J.N.L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1936). Those on the later period include J. Brøndsted, *Early English Ornament* (London and Copenhagen, 1924), A.W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture Before the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1930), W.G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* (London, 1927). See Dickinson, *op. cit.*, 33, L. Webster, "Anglo-Saxon England AD400-1100" in I. Longwith and J. Cherry, *Archaeology in Britain since 1945: New Directions* (British Museum Publications: London, 1988), 119-159, 123

¹⁰⁹ Stenton, "Early English History", 353.

impinged heavily upon English historical sensibilities. Study of the Danish settlement was a product not of the sweeping racist thought of the Germanist 1870s, but of the new technical, regional and multi-disciplinary history of the twentieth century. Its pioneers, significantly, were Scandinavian and nationalist, concerned with the impact of Scandinavians on Europe as a whole, not just England.¹¹⁰ It had to wait until the twentieth century and work on the language, personal names, place-names and sculpture for the first syntheses in English on the impact of the Scandinavians.¹¹¹ Thereafter, however, interest in the Danish migration expanded rapidly, thanks in large measure to the efforts of Sir Frank Stenton.¹¹²

It is from this period, therefore, that the regular comparison of the different types of evidence for all three migrations dates. Only in the twentieth century have there been interdisciplinary studies of the migration episodes, and any need or means to assess the relative representativeness of different types of evidence. In this respect the problem of early medieval migration is emphatically a very modern phenomenon. The thinking on which it is based, on the other hand – that movement of culture necessarily means movement of people – is far older.

Simultaneously, in the most important migration discourse, that of the Anglo-Saxon settlements, the old orthodoxies were being challenged. As early as 1905, H.M. Chadwick was offering an interpretation of the English settlement as a conquest, with ample scope for large-scale Romano-British survival.¹¹³ Anti-German feeling during and after the first world war gave such views more emotional appeal, and there was some little debate in the 1920s

¹¹⁰ J.C.H.R. Steenstrup, *Normannerne* (Copenhagen: 1876-1882).

¹¹¹ A. Mawer, *The Vikings* (CUP: Cambridge, 1913), W.G. Collingwood, *Scandinavian Britain* (Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge: London, 1908), T.D. Kendrick, *A History of the Vikings* (Methuen and Co. Ltd: London, 1930).

¹¹² See F.M. Stenton, "Documents illustrative of the social and economic history of the Danelaw", *British Academy; Records of the Social and Economic History of England and Wales*, vol. 5 (1920), *idem.*, "The Danes in England", in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 13 (1927), 203-46 (repr. in D.M. Stenton (ed.), *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, 136-65).

¹¹³ H.M. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (Cambridge, 1905), *idem.*, *The Origin of the English Nation* (CUP: Cambridge, 1907). See Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 4.

and 1930s on the topic, which saw some further movement towards the notion of conquest.¹¹⁴ These laid the way for the far more substantial questioning of the migration that was to come, but in the inter-war years they remained minority opinions. The vast weight of contemporary thought amongst practitioners of all the Early Medieval disciplines, and in the world outside, remained committed to Germanic maximalism in all its manifestations.¹¹⁵

It was, thus, in the early twentieth century that the Anglo-Saxon discourse took on a form which is still recognizable today. It was split between three disciplines, two of which, English and History, were already firmly established in the universities, whilst the other, Archaeology, was in the process of acquiring a firmer structure and turning itself into a modern discipline. Once established the disciplinary distinctions came to be self-perpetuating; the disciplinary structure turned out specialists in the history, archaeology and language/literature of the early medieval period who, as they themselves became scholars, reinforced the structure itself. In 1941 one of the most eminent holders of the Elrington and Bosworth chair of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge could lament the fact that the study of the Anglo-Saxon period had not been attached wholesale to the department of History in his university, but, as he acknowledged, by this time it was too late.¹¹⁶ For good or ill, disciplinary study was the norm, and three separate early medieval discourses had emerged. At first this made little difference to the way in which each approached early medieval migration. They all inherited the legacy of Stubbs and the nineteenth-century Germanists. The new results from philology, onomastics and archaeology were drafted in to confirm and plug gaps in the written accounts of the Anglo-Saxon settlement, where they seemed to provide strong support for the traditional interpretation.¹¹⁷ Historical methods and research agendas remained dominant, and the new types of study were treated largely as auxiliaries,

¹¹⁴ Summarised in R.V. Lennard, “The character of the Anglo-Saxon conquests: a disputed point”, in *History* 18 (1934), 204-15. See Lucy, *op. cit.*, 29-31.

¹¹⁵ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Chadwick, *Study of Anglo-Saxon*, 49.

¹¹⁷ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 4.

subordinate to the main, documentary, thrust of historical enquiry.¹¹⁸ As time passed, however, the methods and interests of the disciplines grew apart. Those in English departments increasingly turned to Old English literature as the best means of addressing Anglo-Saxon culture. The more historical fields of philology and language study, formerly equal, if not dominant, partners with literature study dwindled and became an intellectual backwater, a mere adjunct to literature study, which was increasingly seen as the true end of Anglo-Saxonism.¹¹⁹ Archaeologists, on the other hand, retained many links with historians right up to the 1960s and beyond, but the impact of New Archaeology brought about a sundering of the ways which is only recently beginning to be undone.¹²⁰

Migration and the Discipline of History

Of the modern early medieval disciplines, it is in History that the strands of continuity from the Anglo-Saxonism of the nineteenth century and before are most obvious. Historians even today are still primarily concerned with the interpretation of documentary evidence. In so doing, they are merely the latest in a long and continuous line dating back to the early medieval historians themselves, and are the heirs to everything which the textual tradition implies; Anglo-Saxonism, nationalism and migrationism. Nevertheless, in the course of the twentieth century, early medieval historians have not only grasped the *Annales* nettle and embraced a far wider range of source materials, but have also thrown off much of the Germanist legacy in their treatment of migrations. On the other hand, historians have seldom explicitly stated the methods that they use for understanding and interpreting migration. It has seemed such a self-evident fact that little need has been felt to indulge in epistemological elaboration on how migration takes place and how it is to be recognised in the record. Essentially, however, there are two types of evidence that have been used by historians with reference to migrations: narrative accounts, and evidence of their alleged effects upon society and culture.

¹¹⁸ Witness Sir Frank Stenton's bibliography to *Anglo-Saxon England* (OUP: Oxford, 1971)(3rd edn: 1st edn., 1943), in which coins, archaeology and architecture, place-names and literature are listed together as "Sources of Incidental Information" (p. 708).

¹¹⁹ A. Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, 1990).

¹²⁰ *ASCEY*, 31.

Early medieval narrative accounts were practically the sole basis for all histories of the period right through to the 1870s and beyond. Although illustration and corroboration was provided by documents such as *Domesday Book*, up to the time of Freeman the central concerns of early medieval historians were above all narrative detail and constitutional principles. From the 1890s, the all-important age of Round and Maitland, however, although the chronological and research framework remained that of the narrative histories, historians increasingly used various types of non-narrative source material – law-codes, charters and *Domesday* – to demonstrate the types of change wrought in society by migrations. The technique was developed most strongly in the controversy over the pre- or post-Conquest origins of feudalism initiated by J.H. Round, but it was soon also applied by Liebermann, Vinogradoff and Stenton to the Scandinavian settlement, where alleged differences between the law, society and economy and language of Eastern and Western parts of England were attributed directly to the settlement of Danes.¹²¹ The thinking underlying this study was simple and essentially identical to that of ancient migrationist thought. It was supposed that evidence of large-scale change, be it in society, language or material culture, could only be explained by settlement on a similarly large scale and by all ranks of society. Such a characterization of the effects of the English settlement was rendered largely impossible by the absence of written sources, and historians became increasingly reliant upon archaeology and place-names in interpreting this migration.¹²²

Sir Frank Stenton and Anglo-Saxon England

The new type of Anglo-Saxon history developed throughout the first half of the twentieth century and was the work of many scholars. However, it found its greatest champion in Sir Frank Stenton, without a doubt the dominating figure of twentieth-century Anglo-Saxon historiography. From the 1900s, he published on all aspects of Anglo-Saxon history, combining this with enthusiasm both for numismatics and toponymy. These were

¹²¹ Round, *Feudal England*, Liebermann (ed.), *Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (1912), P. Vinogradoff, *The Growth of the Manor* (Allen and Unwin: London, 1905), *idem.*, *English Society in the Eleventh Century* (1908), Stenton, “The Danes in England”, *idem.*, *Anglo-Saxon England*.

¹²² Note the fact that Stenton, as an historian, did not attempt to describe the English settlements in *Anglo-Saxon England*.

all put to effect in the field where his strongest interests lay; the institutions and history of the Danelaw.¹²³ From the 1920s onwards, he was engaged in writing his *magnum opus*, a general history of Anglo-Saxon England that would include the fruits of all the new learning.¹²⁴ The only attempt that there had been at such a work, R.H. Hodgkin's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, stopped at King Alfred and could not match Stenton's expertise.¹²⁵ When Stenton's work, *Anglo-Saxon England*, finally appeared in 1943, it was a massive achievement and testament to his expertise in every field of Anglo-Saxon historicising apart from archaeology. Taking its timescale as 550-1087 (the 'settlement' period, significantly, was left to archaeologists) its theme was the creation, during the Anglo-Saxon period, of an England unified both politically and culturally:

It is not until the second half of the sixth century that an outline of continuous English history begins to appear. In round figures the year 550 may be taken as the point from which the volume starts. In political history the central interest of the following centuries is the evolution of an effective monarchy, covering all England, and overriding all the differences of race and custom which separated the various English peoples from one another, and the English people as a whole from the Scandinavian colonists of the North and East.¹²⁶

Stenton has been criticised as a Germanist, and to some extent he deserves the epithet.¹²⁷ Undoubtedly he believed in the 'community of free peasants' as the starting-point

¹²³ J. Campbell, "Frank Merry Stenton", in J. Cannon, R.H.C. Davis, W. Doyle and J.P. Greene, (eds.) *The Blackwell Dictionary of Historians* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1988), 390-1.

¹²⁴ On the writing of *Anglo-Saxon England*, see D. Matthew, "The making of *Anglo-Saxon England*", in D. Matthew (ed.) *Stenton's Anglo-Saxon England Fifty Years On* (University of Reading: Reading, 1994), 111-134.

¹²⁵ Hodgkin, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, Campbell, "Frank Merry Stenton", Matthew, "Making of *Anglo-Saxon England*", 114-115.

¹²⁶ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, viii. See also P. Wormald, "Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the origins of the *Gens Anglorum*", in P. Wormald with D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1983), 99-129, 104, *idem.*, "Engla Lond", 3, *idem.*, "The making of England", in *History Today* (Feb. 1995), 26-32, 26.

¹²⁷ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 7, ASCEY, 31. See also Campbell, "Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*", 56.

of English social history¹²⁸ and the account of the English settlements in the first chapter of *Anglo-Saxon England* is patently maximalist and dependent upon a relatively literal reading of Gildas, Bede and the *Chronicle*.¹²⁹ However the nationalism of the book (and it is implicitly nationalist) is not the Oxford school belief in the divine destiny of the racially-superior English from the very first landing at Ebbsfleet, but lies in the story of an English unity achieved despite regionalism and ethnic complexity, that had to triumph over the Danish invasions and which resisted the centrifugal forces which tore apart the other 'nations' of Europe in the central middle ages.

The influence of *Anglo-Saxon England* has been, and continues to be, massive; it simultaneously summed up the current state of learning on early medieval England and defined the character of the discourse in years to come.¹³⁰ In a single volume, it constructed a framework for the whole of English early medieval history, giving it both unity and a purpose, and helping to reinforce the idea of Anglo-Saxonism whilst freeing it of the overt racism of the Victorian historians. Like all great works of scholarship, *Anglo-Saxon England* became the starting-point and stimulus for all work that followed it, be it broadly in agreement with Stenton's conclusions or opposed.

The years since the first edition of *Anglo-Saxon England* (and, significantly, since the end of the second world war) have seen massive changes in the humanities in general and Anglo-Saxon study in particular.¹³¹ It is a tribute to the way in which Stenton summed up the learning of his time that the criticisms that have been made of *Anglo-Saxon England* express almost completely the ways in which the early medieval discourse has changed since 1943. It is only possible to summarise these briefly here, for they are many and varied, but taken together, they mark a substantial shift away from its traditional nationalist orientation. Firstly there has been a marked reaction against the Germanist belief that the ancient basis

¹²⁸ S. Keynes, "Anglo-Saxon history after *Anglo-Saxon England*", in Matthew (ed.), *Stenton's Anglo-Saxon England Fifty Years On*, 83-110, 85.

¹²⁹ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1-31, especially 30-1.

¹³⁰ Campbell, "Frank Merry Stenton", 390, *idem.*, "Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*", 52.

¹³¹ Keynes, *op. cit.*, 84.

of Anglo-Saxon society was the “community of free peasants”.¹³² Scholars have followed Chadwick's lead and tended towards a far more hierarchical viewpoint, stressing the importance of landed lordship from the earliest period.¹³³ Other criticisms have addressed more directly Stenton's (and traditional Anglo-Saxonism's) overriding interest in the English. Since the war, scholars have become far more conversant with Continental scholarship and far more willing to understand English developments in the context of European-wide trends, rather than in splendid isolation.¹³⁴ Moreover, significant modifications have been made to the Anglocentric picture of the history of the island of Britain, with a massive resurgence of interest in the societies of the Celtic fringe (perhaps associated with growing Scots and Welsh nationalism), and in the fate of the Romano-British kingdoms.¹³⁵ Even Stenton's central thesis, the gradual unification of the English people during the early medieval period, has not gone unchallenged, with Patrick Wormald enquiring if England in the seventh-ninth centuries really was patiently awaiting its inevitable unity.¹³⁶

Another recent development has been the increasing recognition of the historical subjectivity and contextuality of the writing of Anglo-Saxon history itself. Detailed

¹³² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 314.

¹³³ E. John, *Land Tenure in Early England: a discussion of some problems* (Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1960), *idem.*, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies* (Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1966), *idem.*, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1996), 10-11, and n. 21. It is worth noting, however, that Stenton himself drew closer to such an interpretation in his later works (Campbell, “Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*”, 51, 56, John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*, vii-ix, F.M. Stenton, “The thriving of the Anglo-Saxon Ceorl”, in D.M. Stenton (ed.) *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, 383-92).

¹³⁴ Keynes, *op. cit.*, 93-4. See for example, J. Campbell, “Observations on English government from the tenth to the twelfth century”, in *TRHS* (5th ser.) 25 (1975), 39-54.

¹³⁵ K.H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1953), F.T. Wainwright (ed.) *The Problem of the Picts* (Thomas Nelson: Edinburgh, 1956), L. Alcock, *Arthur's Britain* (Allen Lane: London, 1971), J. Morris, *The Age of Arthur, a History of the British Isles from 350-650* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 1973), L. Laing (ed.) *Studies in Celtic Survival* (BAR bs 37: Oxford, 1977), A.S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain* (B.T. Batsford: London, 1989), K.R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom: British political continuity 300-800* (Leicester University Press: London, 1994).

¹³⁶ Wormald, “Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the origins of the *Gens Anglorum*”, *idem.*, “*Engla Lond*”, *idem.*, “The making of England”.

historiographical study of the development of Anglo-Saxonist thought in the modern period has, as shown above, made early medievalists increasingly aware of the religious, political, and above all nationalist agenda that they have traditionally followed.¹³⁷ In addition to this, however, historians have realised that the early medieval written sources are not objective stores of information, but were normally created with particular historiographical ends in mind and must be treated to some degree as propagandist.¹³⁸

To complete the picture of change, it is essential to note the alterations in the relationship of the discipline of History to the other early medieval disciplines. Interdisciplinary communication has undoubtedly increased, especially so since the foundation of interdisciplinary medieval studies departments in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the changes that have occurred in historical viewpoints on the early medieval period have been the product of this contact with other disciplines, and some whole new avenues of research, such as landscape history, have been called into existence entirely on the basis of interdisciplinary co-operation.¹³⁹

Alongside all these other changes there has been a major reassessment of migration and the way in which historians study it. It was in the post-war period that the basic paradigm of migrationist thought, that considerable change implied large numbers of peasant settlers, was challenged. Interestingly, the new thinking on interpretation of the evidence made its mark first on those areas of early medieval study where migrationist thought was newest and not part of a hallowed tradition; the Viking settlements. Peter Sawyer's 1958 article on "The density of the Danish settlement in the Danelaw" expanded into 1962's *The Age of the Vikings*, were revolutionary in putting forward a perspective which could

¹³⁷ Hill, "Norman Yoke", Douglas, *Norman Conquest and British Historians*, Barrow, *Liberal Descent*, MacDougall, *Racial Myth*.

¹³⁸ Keynes, *op. cit.*, 94-5, J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Franks and the English in the ninth century: Some common historical interests", in *History* 35 (1950), 202-18, D.N. Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend", in *History* 62 (1977), 173-92, *idem.*, "Kingship, genealogies and regnal lists", in P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood (eds.) *Early Medieval Kingship* (School of History, University of Leeds: Leeds, 1977), 72-104, P. Sims-Williams, "Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons", *idem.*, "The settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*", Wormald, "Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the origins of the *Gens Anglorum*", Yorke, "Fact or fiction? The written evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries".

¹³⁹ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 8.

unproblematically reconcile considerable consequences of migration with small numbers of settlers.¹⁴⁰ It was comparatively unconcerned with archaeological evidence, but came up with new interpretations for Stenton's wealth of historical and social evidence for the effects of the Vikings in England: some, such as the alleged evidence for changes in estate structures, it merely discounted as representing misunderstood pre-existing structures, but other parts, such as the existence of sokemen, it saw as representing changes brought about by Viking settlement, but not themselves indicating large-scale settlement. In the second edition of his book, Sawyer also introduced medievalists to the work of the philologist Uriel Weinreich, and in particular his dictum that "even for extensive word transferring, large numbers of bilingual speakers need not be involved and the relative size of the groups is not necessarily a factor", a mantra that has been repeated by historians seeking a guide through the dangerous paths of philology ever since, if somewhat to the chagrin of the philologists themselves.¹⁴¹

Sawyer's work prompted a lively debate, which foreshadowed the rather greater discourse on the Anglo-Saxon settlements. The effects of migration, and the ways in which it could be recognized had at last been laid open to discussion rather than merely being assumed. The old consensus split up and a diversity of opinions, on the character, number and importance of migrants replaced it.¹⁴² It is very significant for historical attitudes to migration that most scholars accepted Sawyer's criticisms of Stenton's usage of the social and economic evidence from *Domesday* (in other words, the types of evidence normally associated with historians, as opposed to other medievalists) in support of a peasant migration. Debate turned instead upon linguistic evidence; many toponymists and some historians insisted that the only way in which the massive effect of Norse upon English and the large numbers of Scandinavian-derived place-names in the Danelaw could be explained was by a 'secondary migration' of peasants to the area following in the wake of the invading

¹⁴⁰ P.H. Sawyer, "The density of the Danish settlement in the Danelaw", in *Birmingham Hist Rev.*, *The Age of the Vikings*.

¹⁴¹ U. Weinreich, *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (Linguistic Circle of New York: New York, 1953), 92, Sawyer, *Age of the Vikings* (2nd edn.), 170-1, Barnes, *op. cit.*, 69.

¹⁴² For an overview of the debate, see G. Fellows Jensen, "The Vikings in England: a review", in *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1975), 181-206.

armies.¹⁴³ By the end of the 1970s, this view had won broad support, and was, indeed, supplemented by new research which showed that the Danish armies were perhaps rather more substantial than Sawyer had supposed.¹⁴⁴ Debate on the Viking settlements fizzled out, and remained dormant until it was re-ignited in the 1990s by the combined effects of mounting archaeological evidence and the increasingly anti-migrationist example of the English settlements.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it had established some important principles regarding the study of the evidence for migration.

In the meantime, historians were re-evaluating their interpretations of the English settlements. There were essentially three sources for the new scepticism. Firstly, the documentary evidence for the settlement was reviewed along sceptical and source-critical lines by David Dumville and Patrick Sims-Williams.¹⁴⁶ They showed that even the earliest sources were only sub-contemporary, and tended to observe the common formulas of European origin myths. In sum, although the early written sources were extremely important evidence for political attitudes and views of identity for the period in which they were produced, they could not be deemed reliable in any of their details regarding the early period.¹⁴⁷

Secondly, Anglo-Saxon historians responded to the mounting body of antipathy towards migrationist explanation coming from archaeology. Landscape study was showing how numerous the population of Britain had been throughout the period; with such large

¹⁴³ K. Cameron, "Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the Five Boroughs: the place-name evidence", G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement in Yorkshire*, H.R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (1962), *The Vikings in Britain* (1977).

¹⁴⁴ N.P. Brooks, "England in the ninth century: the crucible of defeat", in *TRHS* (5th ser.) 29 (1979), 1-20.

¹⁴⁵ J.D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (Batsford/English Heritage: London, 1991), R. Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology in Britain and Ireland* (Shire: Princes Risborough, 1995), Hadley, "'And they proceeded to plough and to support themselves': the Scandinavian settlement of England", in *Anglo-Norman Studies* 19 (1997), 69-96.

¹⁴⁶ Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend", Sims-Williams, "Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons", *idem.*, "The settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*".

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* See also S. Reynolds, "Medieval *Origines Gentium*", and B. Yorke, "Fact or fiction? The written evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries AD", in *ASSAH* 6 (1993), 45-50.

numbers of indigenous inhabitants, old notions of population replacement would clearly need to involve movement of population on a logistically incredible scale.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, archaeology was indicating long-term continuity in agricultural exploitation throughout the whole of these periods of alleged massive demographic change. Interpretations positing a general stability of the peasant population, with occasional changes of master, seemed far more in accordance with such data.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there was a reassessment of the nature of early medieval ethnicity. In Continental scholarship, the alleged cultural and racial unity of early medieval peoples had come under close scrutiny as far back as 1961 when Reinhard Wenskus's thesis on the Germanic tribes was published.¹⁴⁹ Wenskus argued that ethnic identity was not an objective fact, and need not necessarily imply shared culture; it was merely the sense of group self-consciousness, based upon a set of perceived characteristics, which could themselves change or be re-defined according to need.¹⁵⁰ Thus ethnicity was a fluid and changeable construct; the early medieval 'peoples' which had formerly seemed to be monolithic entities could now be seen as groups comprising individuals of many different backgrounds and descents, drawn together by the mutual benefits of collective identity. Wenskus's approach initiated lengthy discussion on the topic in Europe and was fundamental to the reassessment of the *Völkerwanderungen*,¹⁵¹ but had comparatively little impact in England until the 1980s. In 1983 and 1985 Susan Reynolds produced important papers which questioned the unity of the 'Anglo-Saxons', and claimed that descriptions of the 'English' in early medieval sources, and particularly in origin myths, were frequently

¹⁴⁸ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 8-9.

¹⁴⁹ R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen Gentes* (Graz: Cologne, 1961).

¹⁵⁰ Wenskus, *Stammesbildung*, 110. cf. P. Amory, "The meaning and purpose of ethnic terminology in the Burgundian laws", in *Early Medieval Europe* 2 i (1993), 1-28, 3.

¹⁵¹ This is a large topic with a substantial literature. See H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (2nd edn.)(University of California Press: Berkeley, 1979), P.J. Geary, "Ethnic identity as a situational construct in the early middle ages", in *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983), 15-26, various papers in H. Wolfram and W. Pohl (eds.), *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besondere Berücksichtigung der Bayern* (Vienna, 1990), W. Pohl, "Conceptions of ethnicity in early medieval studies", in *Archaeologia Polona* 29 (1991), 39-49.

fictions, designed to unite people of widely differing cultural traditions.¹⁵² Almost at the same time, Patrick Wormald was making the related case that amongst the purposes of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* was the assertion of the unity of the 'English' under the Catholic church.¹⁵³ Such views have won wide acclaim and it is now generally accepted that the ethnic terminology of early medieval writers should not be accepted at face value, that it need not be assumed that all those described as 'English' in early sources were necessarily the descendants of Germanic immigrants, and that ethnic identity was a fluid and re-negotiable construct throughout the early middle ages.¹⁵⁴

This has immense implications for the study of migration. Given the dynamic nature of ethnic identity there is no reason to suppose that there will be a correlation of particular ethnic groups and distinctive types of material or linguistic culture.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, it is necessary to see narrative descriptions of population movements, such as Bede's on the English settlements, in their context as legitimating the unity of the *gens*. Such ideas present a radical challenge to historians' handling of population movement, and one which has, so far been only partially met.

Migration and Philology

Of all the types of evidence commandeered in the attempt to understand and characterize early medieval migration it is safe to say that the one still least understood is language.¹⁵⁶ It requires specialist skills which are seldom available to historians or archaeologists, and has hence acquired an air of difficulty. This has not stopped historians and non-specialists from making frequent allusions to the importance of linguistic evidence

¹⁵² Reynolds, "Medieval *origines gentium* and the community of the realm", in *History* 68 (1983), 375-390, 380 ff., *idem*, "What do we mean by "Anglo-Saxon" and "Anglo-Saxons"?", in *Journal of British Studies* 24 (4) (1985), 395-414, 399 ff.

¹⁵³ Wormald, "Bede, the *Bretwaldas*, and the origins of the *Gens Anglorum*".

¹⁵⁴ Amory, *op. cit.*, S. Foot, "The making of *Angelcynn*: English identity before the Norman Conquest", in *TRHS* (6th series) 6 (1996), 25-49, Hines, "The becoming of the English".

¹⁵⁵ Hadley, "And they proceeded to plough...", 83.

¹⁵⁶ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 189-208.

in their treatment of the early medieval migrations, but the usage that they make of it is all-too-often either naïve and uncritical or brief and dismissive. Either approach excites the ire of philologists.¹⁵⁷ Despite the general trend towards interdisciplinary study in the 1990s, the barriers between linguists and other medievalists remain tenacious and resolute.¹⁵⁸

There are two branches to the study of language as it is applied to migrations: morphological, semantic and syntactic studies of the language as it survives in written records, and onomastics, i.e. the study of personal- and place-names. It is a significant divide, for it embodies differences of methodology and, to a certain extent, of personnel and disciplines. In general, those studying language change in itself are frequently specialists in the discipline of comparative and historical socio-linguistics, whereas those studying onomastics are, at least by training, members of English departments and thus more fully integrated into the continuing Germanist traditions and arguments of early medieval study.¹⁵⁹ Place-name study in particular has, throughout its history, been used essentially as a handmaid to migrationist history. This in itself has prompted complaints from philologists that other types of linguistic evidence are neglected, and that linguistic concerns are invariably subordinated to historical in the study of onomastics.¹⁶⁰

In the nineteenth century and before, the connection between the movement of people and the movement of language was, as we have seen in Chapter One, assumed to be absolute and fixed. Grimm's work served only to strengthen and confirm this and asserted that language was the main source of national identity and pride.¹⁶¹ As philology expanded

¹⁵⁷ M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England* (J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd: London, 1978), 11, *idem.*, "Towards a chronology for English place-names", in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1988), 59-76, Higham, *op. cit.*, 190.

¹⁵⁸ See the concerns expressed by Susan Reynolds in "What do we mean by "Anglo-Saxon"?", 401, n. 10.

¹⁵⁹ Gelling, *Signposts*, 22.

¹⁶⁰ B. Hyldegaard Hansen, "The historical implications of the Scandinavian element in English: a theoretical evaluation", in *Nowele* 4 (1984), 53-95, 55, Barnes, "Norse in the British Isles", 66-7.

¹⁶¹ Horsman, "Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism", 392.

and place-name studies emerged from the 1890s onwards, it was these doctrines that formed their theoretical basis. The scale and character of a migration, it was supposed, would be reflected directly in the scale and character of its effects upon language. Thus, to illustrate the nature of the Viking settlement, Otto Jespersen built up an extensive list of Norse loanwords in English, the number and commonplace nature of which, he alleged, demonstrated that Scandinavian settlers had been numerous and from all levels of society. By way of comparison, he showed that French loans have almost entirely replaced English words for matters related to the upper classes, which he took to be representative of the size and relations of English and Normans after the Norman Conquest.¹⁶² In the same way, the paucity of Brittonic words in Old (or Modern) English could be cited as proof of the mass settlement of the English.

The newly-established study of place-names was closely connected with historians from its earliest stages, and took on many aspects of Germanist thinking. For instance, the long-lasting belief that place-names in *-ing* represented the earliest phase of English name-giving was based upon the Germanist vision of the settlement of peasant communities.¹⁶³ Fundamentally, the basis of the study was that place-names represented the organic coinages of peasant communities, made permanent by repetition. A large number of place-names in a particular language could only mean a large number of peasants speaking that language, and migration was claimed to be the reason for their presence. Thus the English and Scandinavian settlements, which produced large numbers of new place-names must have involved large-scale peasant settlement, and the Norman Conquest, which saw only a few new French names despite the massive effects of French upon the English language, could be characterised as an elite settlement. This comparison between the three migrations, and the thinking that underlies it, have been fundamental tenets of toponymic thought throughout the century.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Jespersen, *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, 84-91.

¹⁶³ See J. M. Dodgson, "The significance of the distribution of the English place-names in *-ingas*, *-inga-* in south-east England", in *Medieval Archaeology* 10 (1966), 1-29, especially 1-3.

¹⁶⁴ Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, passim., but especially 215-221.

It is in the post-war period that the divergence of ‘straight’ linguistic study and onomastics began to spring up. The period saw both theoretical and methodological changes in the way in which language was studied, as well as the birth and growth of a whole new discipline. Firstly, 1953 saw the publication of Kenneth Jackson's seminal *Language and History in Early Britain* which at last placed the study of Dark Age Celtic language, place- and personal-names on a firm academic footing. Scholars who were not Celticists could at last do justice to the British place-names, which previously had been rather neglected,¹⁶⁵ and this helped to fuel a gradual rise in awareness of the pre-English past.¹⁶⁶

Secondly, linguistics established itself as a modern and highly theoretical discipline, at the forefront of theoretical development in the humanities as a whole. Although historical linguistics was not particularly prominent in these broader trends of the discipline, there were notable developments even in its approach. These are most associated with Uriel Weinreich, whose book *Languages in Contact* pioneered the comparative study of language contact and language change, taking it far beyond the mere compilation of lists of loanwords and seeking to understand the processes by which language change came about. Weinreich provided models for profound influence upon a language by small groups within populations, and thus ended the equation of considerable linguistic changes with folk migrations, which had previously been the only model used.

Although Weinreich was something of a lone pioneer, his work opened the way for approaches which treated language and culture complexes as less monolithic entities. In the late 1960s and 1970s the study of “language in relation to society” came to define itself as a separate discipline – sociolinguistics – with its counterpart for the investigation of “language in relation to society from times before the human voice is recorded” – historical sociolinguistics – .¹⁶⁷ These started to provide a firm comparative basis for the study of such processes as pidginization, creolization and language death. These, however, were largely

¹⁶⁵ Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, 88.

¹⁶⁶ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 13

¹⁶⁷ M. Richter, “Towards a methodology of historical sociolinguistics”, in *Folia Linguistica Historica* 4 (1985), 41-61, 41.

ignored by early medievalists, although they have started to make a limited contribution to study of the contact of Old Norse with Old English.¹⁶⁸ The 1980s and 1990s gradually saw more studies of the linguistic evidence for early medieval England, either by sociolinguists or making extensive use of sociolinguistic evidence.¹⁶⁹ Although the impact even of these remains limited particularly for the poorly evidenced British/English linguistic transition, sociolinguistic comparison may be the only way in which to address the problems of early medieval language change and its importance seems bound to grow.

The third development of the post-war period is the way in which toponymic study has become more firmly integrated with topography and landscape history.¹⁷⁰ Instead of merely listing names, study has linked them both with the terrain in which they occur and their position within agrarian and political geography, thereby attempting to reinforce their importance as an historical tool.¹⁷¹ It has become an increasingly complex topic, and one which has proved forbidding to non-specialists. The toponymists themselves tend to be members of English departments with training in Old English rather than in socio-linguistics. They have proved remarkably resistant to the new conceptions of the relationship of culture and ethnicity that have been so influential throughout the rest of early medieval study. As recently as 1993, in a discussion of the 'Anglo-Saxon settlement', Margaret Gelling said that "attempts to whittle down the number of invading Germanic people almost to vanishing point founder conclusively against the irrefutable evidence for a massive replacement of the

¹⁶⁸ For instance, in J. Geipel, *The Viking Legacy: The Scandinavian Influence on the English and Gaelic Languages* (David and Charles: Newton Abbot, 1971).

¹⁶⁹ B. Hyldegaard Hansen, "The historical implications of the Scandinavian linguistic element in English: a theoretical evaluation", in *Nowele* 4 (1984), 53-95, J. Hines, "Philology, archaeology and the *adventus Saxonum vel Anglorum*", in A. Bammesberger and A. Wollmann (eds.), *Britain 400-600: Language and History* (Heidelberg, 1990), 17-36, various papers in P. Sture Ureland and G. Broderick (eds.), *Language Contact in the British Isles: Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on Language Contact in Europe* (Max Niemeyer Verlag: Tübingen, 1991), especially J. Hines, "Scandinavian English: a creole in context", pp. 403-427, S.G. Thomason and T. Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1988), 263-342.

¹⁷⁰ K. Cameron, "The significance of English place-names", in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 62 (1976), 135-55.

¹⁷¹ The technique is associated most of all with Kenneth Cameron's pioneering work, *Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the Five Boroughs: the Place-Name evidence*, (inaugural lecture, University of Nottingham: Nottingham, 1965)

general stock of British names by Old English toponyms. A new language might conceivably be adopted in deference to a new ruling class, but the renaming of the vast majority of settlements is inconceivable without the influx of a mass of peasant settlers",¹⁷² and went on to cite the minimal toponymic effect of the Romans and Normans in support of the case. As John Hines has said, the implication is that "thousands of folk of impeccable Romano-British pedigree might have gone over to living in sunken huts, wearing Germanic costume and burying their dead in cremation urns, but they would not so readily have changed their language. Language is therefore supposed to be a better guide to demographic history than material culture is."¹⁷³

For the time being, however, linguistic, and specifically place-name, evidence remains the last big prop for the large-scale migrationist thesis in both the Anglo-Saxon and Danish migration discourses.¹⁷⁴ Cogent criticism by Pauline Stafford, Nicholas Higham and Dawn Hadley has shown that many other factors are involved in the coining of place-names and the replacement of older types beyond old-fashioned ethnic questions; the stability and character of the landholding structure, the early written recording of names (which tends to 'fix' them) and the extent to which settlement is dispersed or nucleated.¹⁷⁵ However, there is, as yet, no attempt by toponymists to reinterpret the place-name evidence in the light of these criticisms for any of the early medieval migration episodes.

Debate on the place-names has overshadowed the broader issue of language change to such an extent that some discussions treat them as though on their own they entirely encompass all the linguistic evidence.¹⁷⁶ This is unfortunate, for, in truth, they are only a part (and not perhaps the most interesting) of a far wider and still significant question.

¹⁷² M. Gelling, "Why aren't we speaking Welsh?", in *ASSAH* 6 (1993), 51-56, 51.

¹⁷³ Hines, "Philology, archaeology and the *adventus Saxonum*", 18.

¹⁷⁴ John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*, 8, 70, Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 190, Hadley, "And they proceeded to plough...", 75.

¹⁷⁵ Stafford, *East Midlands in the Early Middle Ages*, 82, Higham, *op. cit.*, 190, 198-204, Hadley, *op. cit.*, 71-75.

¹⁷⁶ Gelling, "Why aren't we speaking Welsh?", Hadley, *op. cit.*, "'And they proceeded to plough'", 71 ff.

Migration and Material Culture

Of the early medieval disciplines, it is archaeology that has seen the greatest extremes in its attitudes towards migration. From a wholehearted acceptance of Germanism and maximalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is from the discipline of archaeology that have come the most trenchant critics of large-scale population movement, and even of the idea that migration causes culture change, in the past thirty years. This of course has mirrored directly the changes in the dominant theoretical paradigm of the discipline of archaeology itself, from culture history to processual and later to post-processual approaches. Over the same period, through continual excavation, there has been a vast increase in the quantity of material cultural evidence available, and consequently a heightened importance for archaeology *and for archaeologists* in the interpretation of early medieval history, particularly its earlier stages.

The archaeological study of migration at the beginning of the twentieth century still followed the basic principles of Continental comparison established by Kemble. It was still pre-occupied with burial evidence, where ‘Anglo-Saxon’ culture was most easily recognised, and thus was concerned almost exclusively with the early period (up to the eighth century) when accompanied burial was in frequent use.¹⁷⁷ W.G. Collingwood did, indeed, introduce material cultural evidence into his discussion of the Scandinavian settlement, but the absence of ‘ethnically-diagnostic’ cemetery evidence dissuaded others from using it.¹⁷⁸ The Norman Conquest, likewise, did not seem to provide substantial archaeological evidence of the contact of peoples. Until the 1970s, at least, the archaeological study of early medieval migration was identical with the archaeological study of the Anglo-Saxon settlements.

The interpretive framework for this study in the pre-war period was, of course, that of traditional text-based Germanism. Archaeology was expected to make up for the weakness of the documentary sources, and to provide the details of chronology within a basic structure whose fundamentals – the migration of large numbers of Germans in the fifth

¹⁷⁷ Webster, “Anglo-Saxon England, AD 400-1100”, 123.

¹⁷⁸ For instance in Collingwood, *Scandinavian Britain*.

and sixth centuries – was already established. This, however, seemed to be the picture suggested by archaeology itself. The artefacts found by the emerging discipline seemed to support an extreme picture of post-Roman population replacement; whilst large numbers of distinctively Germanic objects were regularly turned up in excavations, there seemed hardly any sign whatsoever of the British population.

What was particularly missing from pre-war Anglo-Saxon archaeology, however, were settlement excavations. E.T. Leeds initiated the study of settlements in the 1920s, but it was fairly slow to develop and by the war there were still no more than a handful of excavated and published settlements.¹⁷⁹ In general there were few advances in archaeological approaches to migration in the pre-war period and interpretations continued in much the same Germanist vein, although increasingly provision was made for a substantial survival of indigenous Britons, albeit stripped of much of their culture.¹⁸⁰

The middle of the twentieth century marks a turning-point in archaeology every bit as significant, if not more so, than those in the other early medieval disciplines. It is effectively since 1956, the founding year of the Society for Medieval Archaeology and its journal *Medieval Archaeology*, that the study of Anglo-Saxon material culture has organized itself as a coherent discipline and established itself properly in the universities.¹⁸¹ In that time, the discipline has grown drastically, and has seen not just a substantial increase in excavation, but a massive expansion in the types of work that it undertakes: aerial photography and extensive fieldwalking have placed excavations in the context of the development of the landscape, there has been a shift towards excavation of settlements, and there has been an expansion away from the Early Saxon ghetto to which archaeological research was formerly largely restricted.¹⁸² Archaeologists in the 1950s-1970s became increasingly interested in

¹⁷⁹ Webster, *op. cit.*, 123.

¹⁸⁰ *ASCEY*, 30-1.

¹⁸¹ T.M. Dickinson, “Anglo-Saxon archaeology: Twenty-five years on”, 33, Webster, “Anglo-Saxon England”, 124.

¹⁸² Dickinson, *op. cit.*, 33-36, Webster, *op. cit.*, *passim.*, Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 8-9. The most recent (though now outdated) large-scale overview of research in Anglo-Saxon archaeology is D.M. Wilson (ed.) *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976).

social and economic concerns and less obsessed with using their data to chart political history. Catherine Hills's important 1979 review summarised much of this work.¹⁸³ Whilst the settlement of England was still a central part of what Anglo-Saxon archaeologists saw as their proper study, it was now placed in the context of settlement studies that showed the substantial size of the Romano-British population. Hills's conclusions were cautious but clear: "Intermarriage and political control may have resulted in large numbers of the existing population taking on an 'Anglo-Saxon' colouring whatever their antecedents. While it would be a mistake to reduce the Anglo-Saxon immigrants to three boatloads of successful warriors, perhaps not all the occupants of 'Anglo-Saxon' graves were of unmixed Germanic blood."¹⁸⁴

The 1970s saw a number of other developments which were highly significant for archaeological attitudes to early medieval migration. Above all, this was the period in which New Archaeology started to have an effect upon the study of early medieval material culture. The functionalist attitudes of the New Archaeologists were fundamentally antipathetic to the notion that population movement caused culture change. It was under this impetus that prehistoric archaeology had rejected the "invasion hypothesis" in the 1960s;¹⁸⁵ as archaeology started to assert its unity and autonomy as a discipline, it became easy for early medieval archaeologists to shrug off their association with early medieval historians and adopt the aims and methods of prehistorians. In the 1980s, processualism became the dominant ideology of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, a position which, arguably, it has retained ever since.

Another extremely significant development of the 1970s was the massive expansion in Viking-Period archaeology associated above all with the urban excavations at York. Archaeological evidence was already being used with a greater or lesser degree of competence in the debate on the character of the Viking settlement initiated by Peter

¹⁸³ C. Hills, "The archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England in the pagan period: a review", in *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979), 297-329.

¹⁸⁴ Hills, *op. cit.*, 313.

¹⁸⁵ Clark, "The invasion hypothesis in British archaeology".

Sawyer,¹⁸⁶ but with the entrance of many archaeologists into Viking-Period studies, a new forum for the debate about recognising migration archaeologically was opened up, complete with its own characteristic archaeological profile, which was very different from that of the Anglo-Saxon period (principally due to the absence of easily-recognised cemeteries of the Scandinavian incomers). Clearly the archaeological methods traditionally applied to the Germanic migrations could not be used for the Viking settlement: but this in turn called into question their validity for the earlier period.

Archaeology thus entered the 1980s with a variety of competing attitudes to the question of migration. Chris Arnold was the first to articulate the processual antithesis towards migratory explanations in his *Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England*. He entirely rejected the historical accounts of early English history, and instead chose to characterise the early Anglo-Saxon period as prehistoric and accessible only through archaeological evidence. He claimed that the transformation of Roman Britain to early Saxon England was brought about by “very small numbers” of mostly male immigrants.¹⁸⁷ His approach was heavily criticised, but it did help to bring attention to the New Archaeological perspective and refocused attention on the whole question of the migrations.

Processualist and minimalist attitudes were not the only ones abroad in the 1980s; indeed the fire of the debate has been partly due to the enormous variety of attitudes to migration now available. The post-processualist reaction against the mechanistic environmental determinism of the New Archaeologists and the more sympathetic attitude towards documentary history ensured a more sympathetic hearing for interpretations with a place for migratory explanation. The new interest in the active and symbolic usage of material culture also encouraged new ways of looking at how ethnic identities were constructed with material culture.¹⁸⁸ Some archaeologists even dallied with the use of

¹⁸⁶ For instance the debate over the Middleton cross.

¹⁸⁷ Arnold, *From Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England*, 161, Hamerow, “Migration theory”, 166.

¹⁸⁸ Hines, *Scandinavian Character of Anglian England*, “Scandinavian character of Anglian England: an update”, “Philology, Archaeology and the *Adventus Saxonum*”, “The Becoming of the English”, “Cultural change and social organization”, “Britain after Rome”, various papers in Graves Brown, Jones and Gamble (eds.), *Cultural Identity and*

skeletal evidence for detecting migrants.¹⁸⁹ It seems possible that usage of DNA fingerprinting could place comparative study of skeletal types on a more reliable footing by replacing phenotypical comparison with genotypical, although this study remains in its early stages.

The 1990s thus see an immense plurality of archaeological approaches to migration. To some, the use of archaeological evidence to answer historical questions is essentially misguided.¹⁹⁰ Others, however, still feel able to use archaeology to fix the date and circumstances of the *adventus Saxonum*,¹⁹¹ or to argue a maximalist,¹⁹² or a minimalist¹⁹³ case for the number of settlers. Others still see the whole question as irrelevant and believe that population movement and cultural change are unrelated.¹⁹⁴ It is not hard to understand the bemusement of some archaeologists with the whole issue of migration,¹⁹⁵ or the way in which others have sought elucidation in anthropological migration theory.¹⁹⁶ This last approach seems to offer considerable prospects of increases in understanding, but migration remains very much a point at issue for archaeologists.

Interdisciplinary Approaches and Landscape History

In the course of the twentieth century there have, as we have seen, emerged three

Archaeology.

¹⁸⁹ H. Härke, “Changing symbols in a changing society: the Anglo-Saxon weapon burial rite in the seventh century”, in M.O.H. Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo* (Boydell and Brewer: Woodbridge, 1992), 149-167, 154-5.

¹⁹⁰ J.D. Richards, “An archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England”, in G. Ausenda (ed.), *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians* (Boydell: Woodbridge, 1995), 51-74, 56.

¹⁹¹ e.g. H.W. Böhme, “Das Ende der Römerherrschaft”.

¹⁹² Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 112.

¹⁹³ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*.

¹⁹⁴ Lucy, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire*.

¹⁹⁵ Hamerow, “Migration theory”.

¹⁹⁶ Harke, *Scull*.

distinct strands of thought on the early medieval period. Each discipline has its own agendas and questions, and a body of evidence which it feels to be its particular property (although it should be noted that these frequently overlap). Within their departments, early medievalists tend to be in a small minority; this has had the considerable benefit of encouraging them to look outside the period and exposing them to comparative material. On the other hand, it has meant that they have been involved in the separate developments of each discipline. Although early medieval studies must be treated in many ways as a single discourse with a linking philosophy, it is also one that is riven in three by disciplinary divisions.

This inevitably has had some undesirable repercussions. Interdisciplinary communication has been common, but has tended to be unsystematic, patchy and sporadic. Specialists in any one discipline are often either cavalierly dismissive, or naively trusting of the results of research in other disciplines.¹⁹⁷

It is precisely for this reason that increased interdisciplinary communication and co-operation has long been preached almost as the messianic salvation of early medieval studies.¹⁹⁸ From the late 1960s, this was put into practice with the development of interdisciplinary Centres for Medieval Studies as research and teaching units, and the results have been evident in a number of scholars who have combined expertise in two or more disciplines; Edward James, Guy Halsall, John Hines, Nick Higham, Dawn Hadley, to name but a few.

In other ways, the post-war period has seen considerable co-operation between the disciplines, for instance in the development of landscape history, and the many examples of borrowing from one discipline to another. As interdisciplinary communication grows, it is becoming harder to think in terms of an 'archaeological' viewpoint, or an 'historical' viewpoint on migration (or any other issue), although differences do still remain, particularly

¹⁹⁷ Wainwright, *Archaeology and Place-Names and History*, 96.

¹⁹⁸ Wainwright, *op. cit.*, passim, C. Fell, "Norse studies: then, now and hereafter", in A. Faulkes and R. Perkins (eds.) *Viking Revaluations* (Viking Society for Northern Research: London, 1993), 85-99, 96 agrees but notes the comment that "the stress is too often on the inter and not enough on the discipline."

between, on the one hand, archaeologists and historians, who have embraced new thinking on ethnicity and its relation to culture and toponymists, who have not.

It is therefore too early to speak of a rapprochement of the three disciplines of early medieval study. Nevertheless, such a coming-together can only have beneficial effects for study of early medieval migration, as far as can be judged from the extent that this has already occurred.

Discussion

This chapter has rapidly considered an enormous amount of material, covering some 1500 years, and embracing many aspects of the ways in which knowledge of the early medieval period has been produced and used. This has been necessary in order to demonstrate the strands of continuity that unite the early medieval origin myths and modern thought on population movement and to show how closely related migrationism has always been to historicizing about the 'Anglo-Saxons'. Here, however, it is useful to reflect upon some of the general trends that this survey has indicated and to draw some conclusions about the development of thought on early medieval migrations.

At the beginning of the chapter it was noted that there has been a specifically English tendency to treat the fifth to seventh centuries as a quite well-defined and distinct unity (the 'Anglo-Saxon period'), and that population movement and the ensuing flux in identities seemed to be the defining characteristic which was the chief grounds for belief in this alleged unity. It was suggested, furthermore, that both migrationism and Anglo-Saxonism were strongly associated with nationalist interpretations of the early medieval past.

This inevitably raised the question of how and when these associations had arisen. The answer, it was suggested, was that they had begun to develop in the early medieval period itself, and were established in their complete form by the historians of the twelfth century. The tradition of English historicizing was founded, by Bede and others, on the basis of origin myths which held a fundamental role for population movement. Migration thus became an established topos and a crucial part of the English *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* that the writers of English history were attempting to foster.

With the association of migration and English insular identity so firmly entrenched, it is no surprise that in the great crisis of English identity that followed the Norman Conquest, these ideas would be evoked once again by a new wave of historical writers. The twelfth-century historians were crucial in defining Anglo-Saxon history as a unit and instilling the idea that migrations were a feature peculiarly significant to it. In their works the fully-fledged nationalist version of Anglo-Saxon history was available to anyone who chose to use it. Those who did so, however, would inherit all of the migrationist beliefs and assumptions with which it was associated.

After the break caused by the dominance of the Brutus origin myth, the ancient tradition of evocation of the various early medieval migrations for political ends was enthusiastically taken up in the early modern period. Between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century, commentators picked and chose whichever of the early medieval migration stories best suited their purposes. This might be the Norman Yoke in the seventeenth century or the heroic Anglo-Saxons of the 1870s; the basic pattern of use was the same.

It was, however, not in the extremes of Germanism of the Oxford School that the migrationist schema of Anglo-Saxon history reached its most developed stage, but in the first half of the twentieth century. It was only with the development of methodological apparatus for detecting and characterising migration using not just narrative evidence, but non-narrative written sources, archaeology, language and place-names that all the resources of Anglo-Saxon study were mobilised in pursuit of migrations, and that migration study started to raise the questions of interdisciplinary communication and co-operation that were later to become so central to it.

The new types of study had certainly broadened the scope of migrationism, but they brought with them the seeds of destruction for the whole migrationist topos, for, in the post-war period, they started to produce results and conclusions that were incompatible with a wholehearted belief in maximalist migrationism. From the 1950s onwards a range of developments; some methodological (such as the development of aerial photography or large-scale settlement excavation), some theoretical (for instance, new interpretations of the relationship of ethnicity and culture) have caused a turning-away from old-fashioned

migrationism. Although not all of these developments have been directly related to it, the fundamental and paradigmatic shift which has underlain this turning-away is a retreat from the sorts of nationalist usages of early medieval history which were explicit in the works of the Oxford School historians and implicit in Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*. This represents change on a truly drastic and unprecedented scale, for, as has been shown, previously, historicizing on the Anglo-Saxon past has always, and without exception, been nationalist. Nor has any single new orthodoxy emerged to replace “tracing the origins of England” as an answer to the question “What is English early medieval history for?”. Instead plurality has replaced consensus, and nowhere has this been more the case than in migration study, which now sees an incredibly broad variety of opinions expressed on the scale, character and significance of the various population movements.

On the other hand, many of the habits of mind of nationalist early medieval study have proved too strongly entrenched to overturn rapidly. Many, indeed, are perpetuated by the structures of university teaching, which still tend to encourage a belief in an autonomous ‘Anglo-Saxon’ period. The question of the usage of the phrase ‘Anglo-Saxon’ itself captures many of the problems faced by early medievalists in reconciling themselves to a non-nationalist future. It is a term recognized both by early medievalists and non-specialists, and it seems pedantic to insist that it be excised from our vocabulary (which would, besides, only necessitate the coining of a replacement or replacements which would carry as much, if not more, cultural baggage) but it should be remembered that it is effectively impossible to write non-nationalist (and non-migrationist) history whilst still employing such terminology.

Chapter 3: The English Settlements

3.0 Introduction

The Anglo-Saxon Settlement: Epitome of Migrationism

As the introductory chapters have shown, of the three English early medieval episodes, it is the Anglo-Saxon migration discourse which has attracted most attention, at least since the eighteenth century, from historians and the general public. Whatever the alleged constitutional, legal or racial significance of the Scandinavian settlement and the Norman Conquest, they have never possessed the emotional weight that the claims of English ethnogenesis have lent to the Anglo-Saxon settlements. It is this which has made the changing attitudes to the English settlement over the course of the century so controversial and hotly-contested by both sides. Furthermore, unlike the other migration discourses, debate throughout the century has embraced every discipline of early medieval study. Documentary historians, linguists and archaeologists have all sought to harness their specialism to shedding light on the traditional fundamental questions: When did the English arrive? Were they Angles, Saxons and Jutes, as Bede suggests? How many migrants were there? How long did the settlement take? As each discipline has evolved its own specialist techniques and attitudes, the task of reconciling them has become increasingly fraught with difficulties. This has particularly been the case in the last twenty years as the different disciplines have come to develop attitudes to migratory explanation highly at variance with one another, and in the case of many archaeologists and toponymists, diametrically opposed. It is therefore in the Anglo-Saxon settlements discourse that the problems of early medieval migration take their most strident form.

The Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Yorkshire

The emergence of a distinctive Yorkshire perspective on the Anglo-Saxon settlement is largely a development of the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century most historians viewed askance the scanty documentary evidence and steered clear of any attempt to

comment upon the migration in the county. E.A. Freeman, for instance, in a lecture to the Royal Institution at Kingston-upon-Hull in 1876 declared that “of the whole story of the English Conquest no part is more obscure than the history of the English settlement in Deira”, adding that it was “shrouded in utter darkness.”¹ It was, however, at this time that the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Yorkshire began to emerge, largely through the efforts of amateur antiquarian barrow-diggers. Over the middle and later years of the nineteenth century William Greenwell (1820-1918) and J.R. Mortimer (1825-1911) between them opened some 600 barrows, most of them in Yorkshire.² Although their chief targets were the prehistoric interments within the barrows they also frequently encountered (and recorded) Anglo-Saxon burials secondary to such monuments.³ Just as in the rest of England, in Yorkshire it was upon funerary evidence that archaeological investigation of the English settlement, and Anglo-Saxon archaeology as a whole, was based. An abiding bias towards cemeteries continues to pervade the Early Saxon archaeological record of the area even in the present day.⁴

Mainly as a result of the activities of Greenwell and Mortimer, by the beginning of the twentieth century it had become possible to discern the principal characteristics of the early Anglo-Saxon archaeological record in Yorkshire. It was swiftly recognised that in amount it was very much sparser than that found south of the Humber, and in the West Riding so scarce as to be almost non-existent.⁵ This seemed to concur with historical references which suggested that the English advance in the North had been held up by the British kingdom of Elmet up to the first quarter of the seventh century.⁶ Even the ethnologist and committed

¹ E.A. Freeman, *English Towns and Districts: A series of addresses and sketches* (Macmillan and Co: London, 1883), 273, 275.

² Greenwell and Rolleston, *British Barrows*, Mortimer, *Forty Years Researches in British and Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire*, Lucy, *ASCEY*, 56-7.

³ B. Marsden, *The Early Barrow-Diggers* (Shire Publications: Aylesbury, 1974), 96 ff.

⁴ *ASCEY*, 57.

⁵ R.A. Smith, “Anglo-Saxon remains”, in W. Page (ed.) *VCH York* (vol. 2), 71-108, 73.

⁶ *Historia Brittonum*, ch. 63.

Teutonist J. Beddoe was moved to see a British element in the present-day population of the West Riding, saying:

The more we study the subject, the more clearly we see how difficult it is to root out, literally to extirpate, or even to clear away, to exterminate, an aboriginal breed of men, and how strong the tendency of such a breed is to reassert itself. And it is quite difficult to believe that the people of the little British kingdom of Elmet were entirely cleared away.⁷

At approximately the same time J.E.A. Jolliffe was pointing out the similarities in tenurial organization between Northumberland and Durham and medieval Wales, and surmising at least some measure of survival of the British population in the area.⁸ Although Jolliffe specifically excluded Yorkshire from his analysis, as he believed earlier landholding arrangements had been wiped out by the Viking settlement, a sense was evolving that early Northumbrian history, and in particular the character of the Anglo-Saxon migration might have been markedly at variance with that of the South.

However with the limited resources of evidence available – an early written record so insubstantial as to be practically non-existent, and a poorly-organised and problematical archaeological record – that early history remained lamentably obscure. The work of historians of Yorkshire throughout the twentieth century has been concentrated upon making a detailed early history possible by increasing the available evidence. This has been done in two ways: by exploiting new and different types of evidence; and by attempting to maximise the usefulness of the known and established data base. The former can be perceived in the publication between 1928 and 1962 of the English Place-Name Society volumes for the three Ridings, in the gradual trend towards settlement excavation, most notably at Wharham Percy and West Heslerton, which has gone some way towards redressing the massive bias towards cemeteries, and, most recently, in the expansion of landscape archaeology and studies of land usage. The latter was attempted (rather less successfully) by making out a case that the known written record had special relevance for

⁷ J. Beddoe and J.H. Rowe, “The ethnology of West Yorkshire”, in *YAJ* 19 (1907), 31-60, 31.

⁸ J.E.A. Jolliffe, “Northumbrian institutions”, in *English Historical Review* 41 (1926), 1-42.

the north, and that aspects of the traditional invasion narratives represented direct descriptions of the settlement of Yorkshire. Despite the (presumably sincere) stated beliefs of those scholars involved in these developments that a history was only possible on the basis of a synthesis of all the evidence,⁹ throughout the whole of the middle of the century, it was upon invasionist assumptions and a chronological framework derived directly from the written record that all interpretation was based. The basic Stubbsian formula of mass migration and displacement of the indigenes was never seriously challenged; instead debate centred on the details of the settlement; the date of the *adventus Saxonum* in the north, the circumstances of the initial settlement, whether it was a peaceful plantation of mercenaries by the late Roman authorities or an out-and-out assault by Germanic raiders, and the continental origins of the settlers.

Two scholars had particular prominence in constructing the so-called ‘traditional’ interpretation of the English settlement of the north: the historian Peter Hunter Blair, who, although making use of the archaeological and other types of evidence was primarily concerned with written sources; and the librarian and archaeologist J.N.L. Myres, who dedicated his career to the study of early Anglo-Saxon cinerary urns. In a seminal article published in 1947, Hunter Blair argued that from the fourth century onwards, Germanic mercenaries (or *fœderati*) were employed by the Roman authorities to protect the area against Pictish attack, and, to this end, were installed on land in the Yorkshire Wolds and near York.¹⁰ Their numbers and influence grew until, at some point in the early-mid-fifth century the local authorities found themselves unable to provision them, which led to a revolt, the overthrow of the Roman elite, and the wresting of control over the heart of the northern Roman province by the newcomers.¹¹ Thereafter developments were uncertain until the emergence of the historical kingdom of Deira in the mid-sixth century, but it was clearly envisaged that it was a period of considerable migration and ethnic confrontation between the English and the British. In all its fundamentals, this was based upon the

⁹ P. Hunter Blair, “The origins of Northumbria”, in *Archaeologia Aeliana* (4th series) 25 (1947), 1-51, 50.

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, 42-3, although Hunter Blair's latter-day caution about the historicity of this should be noted (P. Hunter Blair, *Northumbria in the days of Bede* (Gollancz: London, 1976), 26.).

¹¹ Hunter Blair, “The origins of Northumbria”, 43.

narrative account of the coming of the English found in the preface of the *De Excidio Brittonum* (*DEB*) of Gildas. Hunter Blair's contention was that Gildas had a particularly northern outlook, and that it was legitimate therefore to use his testimony as a narrative history of the north in the fourth and fifth centuries. Such a view still commands considerable support, although the 'northern Gildas' has recently come under strong attack.¹² J.N.L. Myres's vision of the settlement of Yorkshire was less explicitly based on Gildas, but nevertheless was entirely compatible with the *DEB*.¹³ Based upon his dating of the early Anglo-Saxon cremation urns he envisaged a Germanic mercenary settlement under Roman control from the fourth century onwards around the area of the Humber and its tributaries, which was to be the nucleus not only for Deira, but for the English settlement of Lindsey, and ultimately of Bernicia and Mercia.¹⁴ These mercenaries (or *læti*) did not assimilate, but remained autonomous and independent on the lands that they had been given, gradually increasing their numbers by further migration, until revolting and establishing a new barbarian kingdom early in the fifth century.¹⁵

Although they differ in the details, and in the faith which they are willing to invest in Gildas, Myres's and Hunter Blair's accounts are both very solidly grounded in the 'Germanist' view of the settlement, itself a product of the usage of written records. In common with many of their contemporaries Hunter Blair and Myres assumed that the 'English' and 'British' were well defined and discrete ethnic entities, instantly recognisable both in the written and the archaeological record. Given this presumption, the migration and population replacement thesis did indeed seem the best means of explaining the

¹² E.A. Thompson, "Gildas and the History of Britain", in *Britannia* 10 (1979), 203-226, 217, Sims-Williams, "Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons", 7, D.N. Dumville, "The chronology of *De Excidio Britanniae* Book 1", in M. Lapidge and D.N. Dumville (eds.) *Gildas: New Approaches* (Boydell: Woodbridge, 1984), 59-80, 62-6. Contrast N.J. Higham, *The English Conquest: Gildas and Britain in the fifth century* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1994), 91-96, and D.N. Dumville, "The origins of Northumbria: some aspects of the British background" in S. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1989), 213-222..

¹³ See Myres, *English Settlements*, 12-13, for Myres's assessment of Gildas's value (considerable) and location (the North).

¹⁴ Myres, *English Settlements*, 174-5.

¹⁵ *op. cit.*, 189.

disappearance of Romano-British culture and the appearance of Anglo-Saxon in Yorkshire. However it was this sort of presumption that increasingly came to be challenged by both historians and archaeologists in the post-war period.

Yorkshire migration study in the post-war period

The impact of the post-war developments in early medieval study upon the Anglo-Saxon settlement discourse in Yorkshire was rather slow and limited at first. In the late 1950s and 1960s, the main developments were a result of Glanville Jones's research on land tenure.¹⁶ He claimed that the 'multiple estates', as he called them, that Jolliffe had suggested were indicative of the survival of British landholding structures north of the Tees, were also visible in Yorkshire and pointed to legal and toponymic evidence for the survival of appreciable numbers of Britons throughout the north of England as late as the eleventh century.¹⁷

The 1970s saw a great resurgence of popular and academic interest in the Celtic past, and the relations of British and English became the focus of considerable attention.¹⁸ Yorkshire, with all its indications of a less massive settlement, seemed ripe ground for study of the interface between Britons and Saxons. The county was propelled rapidly to the forefront of the reconsideration of Germanism that was gathering pace by two PhD theses, Margaret Faull's *British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire*, and Bruce Eagles's *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside*.¹⁹ Both were fundamentally migrationist in character, and

¹⁶ G.R.J. Jones, "Early territorial organisation in England and Wales", in *Geografiska Annaler* 43 (1961), 174-81, *idem.*, "Basic patterns of settlement distribution in Northern England", in *Advancement of Science* 71 (1961), 192-200, *idem.*, "Early territorial organization in Northern England and its bearing on the Scandinavian settlement", in A. Small (ed.), *The Fourth Viking Congress* (Oliver and Boyd: London and Edinburgh, 1965), 67-84, 72 ff., *idem.*, "The cultural landscape of Yorkshire: the origins of our villages", in *Yorkshire Philosophical Society Transactions* 1966, 45-57.

¹⁷ Jones, "Early territorial organization in Northern England", 73-77.

¹⁸ Alcock, *Arthur's Britain: History and Archaeology, AD 367-634*, Ashe (ed.) *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*, Morris, *The Age of Arthur*. See ASCEY, 34.

¹⁹ Faull, *British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire*; see also *idem.*, "British survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria", in L. Laing (ed.), *Studies in Celtic Survival* (BAR bs 37:

depended upon a correlation of particular types of culture and ethnicity, but they proposed significant amendments to the traditional Gildasian view of the settlement and, in particular, envisaged the survival of Britons on a large scale.

Bruce Eagles demonstrated that 'English' material in Yorkshire which could be dated to the early fifth century was practically non-existent, and that for the second half of the century was very insubstantial and restricted to only a handful of sites; most obviously at Sancton and York.²⁰ There were notable correspondences between the early Anglo-Saxon settlement pattern and that of the post-Roman period, and the earliest settlements he saw as infilling.²¹ Only in the sixth century did the amount and distribution of 'English' material substantially increase. He argued that the first English settlers were indeed troops drafted in in the fifth century to protect the area by the sub-Roman authorities, and that a rebellion may have taken place c. 460, but that it was only in the sixth century that further substantial migration allowed expansion of the English to take control of the whole of the East Riding and leave their characteristic mark on the burial record of the area.²² Furthermore, he emphasized linguistic, archaeological and historical indications that the native population was not exterminated, but that it passed through a bilingual period, and gradually acculturated, leaving very substantial traces of its influence in the early English culture of the area.²³ Eagles's work however contained little or no theoretical consideration of the issues involved; he seems entirely happy to make the same equations between culture and ethnicity as did Myres or Hunter Blair.

The extent and character of British survival in Yorkshire was the express target of Margaret Faull's thesis. Hers was an extremely broad-based interdisciplinary study, the first synthesis of its type for Yorkshire, with numerous illustrations of continuity between the late

Oxford, 1977), 1-55, and *idem.*, "Britons and Angles in Yorkshire", in *Studium* vi (1974), 1-24, on why Yorkshire was chosen as the particular focus for this attention. B.N. Eagles, *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside* (2 vols.)(BAR bs 68 i+ii: Oxford, 1979).

²⁰ Eagles, *Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside*, 241.

²¹ *op. cit.*, 225-9.

²² *op. cit.*, 241-3.

²³ *op. cit.*, 242.

Roman and early Anglo-Saxon cultures in the area, drawn above all from the toponymic, burial and settlement records, but also making use of the shreds of documentary evidence in the English and British records. She argued that this continuity could only be explained by the survival of a significant British component in the 'early Anglo-Saxon' population of Yorkshire, both in their own distinct communities in poorer upland areas (indicated by place-names incorporating the element *wealh*, 'British') and amidst the 'Germanic' population, where they were absorbed into Anglo-Saxon culture in the fifth and sixth centuries.²⁴ In her opinion the process was only completed with the disruption caused by the Scandinavian settlements in the ninth century.²⁵ Nevertheless, she specifically ruled out the possibility that the incoming Anglo-Saxons were a small military elite, and envisaged a pattern of gradual Anglo-Saxon infiltration into new areas, by a phase of conquest followed by a phase of large-scale population influx.²⁶

Although these studies were basically traditional in their approach to ethnicity and migration, they had shown that any explanation of the British-English transition in Yorkshire must include acculturation and assimilation alongside migration as its main mechanisms. In absolute terms they clarified the chronology, and paved the way for a great deal of fruitful study on the late Romano-British of the north and their interaction with English culture. However they had also provided an illustration of the way in which the post-Roman culture change in Britain could be imagined without total population replacement, a model which could be, and was, applied easily to the rest of England.²⁷

The 1980s and 1990s

²⁴ Faull, *BSASY*, 498-501. On the place-name element *wealh*, see *idem.*, "The semantic development of Old English *wealh*", in *Leeds Studies in English* (n.s.) 8 (1975), 20-44, and, more recently, K. Cameron, "The meaning and significance of Old English *walh* in English place-names", in *English Place-Name Society Journal* 12 (1980), 1-53.

²⁵ *BSASY*, 500.

²⁶ *op. cit.*, 481.

²⁷ Hamerow, "Migration theory and the migration period", 165. Compare R. Miket, "A re-statement of evidence for Bernician Anglo-Saxon burials", in P. Rahtz, T. Dickinson and L. Watts (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries 1979* (BAR bs 82: Oxford, 1980), 289-306, 304.

The late 1980s saw a dramatic expansion in knowledge of late Roman and early Saxon settlement in Yorkshire, partly thanks to the publication of the long-running excavations at Wharram Percy, but mainly due to the massive excavation of the settlement(s) at West Heslerton and the associated cemetery.²⁸ Previous to these digs, settlements of the period in Yorkshire had been very poorly understood,²⁹ but they provided firm indications of continuity of settlement patterns from the fifth-seventh centuries.³⁰

Another significant development for the archaeology of migration in Yorkshire was the publication of John Hines's *Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period*. On the strength of particular types of metalwork found both in Norway and in eastern England (both the Humber basin and East Anglia), Hines posited an *additional* migration, unmentioned by the written sources, of a relatively small number of individuals from Scandinavia to 'Anglian' England, which opened up a range of contacts between the two areas, and lent Anglian England a distinctively Scandinavian character.³¹ He claimed

²⁸ M.W. Beresford and J.G. Hurst, *Wharram Percy: Deserted Medieval Village* (B.T. Batsford/English Heritage: London, 1990), D. Powlesland, C.A. Houghton and J.H. Hanson, "Excavations at Heslerton, North Yorkshire, 1978-1982", in *Archaeological Journal* 143 (1986), 53-173, D. Powlesland, "Approaches to the excavation and interpretation of the Romano-British Landscape in the Vale of Pickering", in J. Price and D.R. Wilson (eds.) *Recent Research in Roman Yorkshire* (BAR bs 193: Oxford, 1988), 139-150, D. Powlesland, *The Heslerton Anglo-Saxon Settlement - A Guide to the Excavation of an Early Anglo-Saxon Settlement and its Cemetery* (North Yorkshire County Planning Department: Northallerton, 1987).

²⁹ See Margaret Faull's pessimism in "Settlement and society in North-East England in the fifth century", in P.R. Wilson, R.F.J. Jones and D.M. Evans (eds.), *Settlement and Society in the Roman North* (Bradford, 1984), 49-56.

³⁰ M. Bell, "Environmental archaeology as an index of continuity and change in the medieval landscape", in M. Aston, D. Austin and C. Dyer (eds.) *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1990), 269-86, 280, *Northumbria*, 72-4.

³¹ J. Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period* (BAR bs 124: Oxford, 1984), *idem.*, "The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England: an update", in M.O.H. Carver (ed.) *The Age of Sutton Hoo: The Seventh Century in North-Western Europe* (Boydell and Brewer: Woodbridge, 1992), 315-329, *idem.*, *Clasps, Hektespenner, Agraffen: Anglo-Scandinavian Clasps of Classes A-C of the 3rd to 6th Centuries AD: Typology, Diffusion and Function* (Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm, 1993).

that cultural components from a number of differing traditions were appropriated and blended during the Migration Period in the construction of the 'Anglian' identity of north eastern England.³² Hines's work was indicative of the sea-change in attitudes to the relationship between culture and ethnicity. Increasingly culture of whatever type, linguistic or material, was thought to be used actively in construction of ethnic and cultural identities rather than merely being the passive reflection of established and stable racial differences.³³ Hines's thesis also inspired a fruitful train of enquiry by various authors on the subject of the North Sea as a cultural highway.³⁴

The 1990s saw the publication of a major synthesis of the new evidence for the Yorkshire settlement by the historian Nicholas Higham, which drew heavily upon his general work on the settlement and Gildas.³⁵ Higham explicitly rejected the idea of a 'northern Gildas', and with it, almost all hope of reconstructing the fifth- and early sixth- century history of the North on the basis of written evidence.³⁶ His interpretation was based largely upon archaeological evidence, with a comparatively small place for toponymy, which he viewed with marked scepticism.³⁷ He envisaged the migration of very small numbers of

³² Hines, "Scandinavian character of Anglian England: an update", 317.

³³ J. Hines, "Philology, archaeology and the *adventus Saxonum vel Anglorum*", in A. Bammesberger and A. Wollmann (eds.), *Britain 400-600: Language and History* (Heidelberg, 1990), 17-36, *idem.*, "The becoming of the English: Identity, material culture and language in early Anglo-Saxon England", in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 7 (1994), 49-59, *idem.*, "Cultural change and social organisation in early Anglo-Saxon England", in G. Ausenda (ed.), *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians* (Boydell and Brewer: Woodbridge, 1995), 75-93, *idem.*, "Britain after Rome: Between multiculturalism and monoculturalism", in P. Graves-Brown, S. Jones and C. Gamble (eds.) *Cultural Identity and Archaeology: The Construction of European Communities* (Routledge: London, 1996), 256-70.

³⁴ H. Clarke, "The North Sea: A Highway of Invasions, Immigration and Trade in the Fifth to Ninth Centuries A.D.", in A. Bang-Andersen (ed.) *The North Sea* (Stavanger-Oslo, 1985), 39-48, M.O.H. Carver, "Pre-Viking Traffic in the North Sea", in S. McGrail (ed.) *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons* CBA Res. Rep. 71 (Council for British Archaeology: London, 1990), 117-125, 119.

³⁵ Higham, *Northumbria*, *idem.*, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, *idem.*, *The English Conquest*,

³⁶ Higham, *op. cit.*, 61-2.

³⁷ *op. cit.*, 71.

English warriors, who nevertheless exerted massive cultural influence upon society, due to their elevated status; the classic élite-dominance theory. The first incursions of the English Higham saw as opportunist land-grabs in the mid-late fifth century by a warlord probably from East Anglia, which established an important although numerically limited English presence in the Derwent valley.³⁸ Unlike Eagles, he believed the expansion of 'English' numbers in the sixth century not to be the result of further migration, but the consequence of acculturation and assimilation of the British population, who hoped to share in the benefits of being English.³⁹ By the time of Bede this process was so complete that the myth of mass migration and destruction of the British of Deira was entirely tenable.

A more radical view has been taken by the archaeologist Sam Lucy, who has asserted that migration had no significance whatsoever in the changes going on in Yorkshire between the fifth and seventh centuries.⁴⁰ Her 1995 thesis is based exclusively upon archaeological evidence, and in particular upon a re-interpretation of the distinctive burial record of the East Riding. It is Lucy's contention that the communities of Yorkshire adopted new patterns of material cultural usage to signal their rejection of Roman modes of life, and their own highly localised identities.⁴¹ The interpretation of the new types of culture as 'Germanic' and intrusive she sees as a misinterpretation of the evidence due to a reliance on unreliable documentary research frameworks.⁴² Although she does not deny that migration took place, she takes pains to sever the link between material cultural practices and the places in which people were born.⁴³ The keys to understanding the change from Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon must be sought in changes in the way in which people perceived themselves and their communities. "There were", she says, "no Anglo-Saxons in the early

³⁸ *op. cit.*, 75.

³⁹ *op. cit.*, 99.

⁴⁰ Lucy, *ASCEY*, passim.

⁴¹ *op. cit.*, 221-225.

⁴² *op. cit.*, 219, 225. In the same vein, see M. Whyman, "Invisible people? Material culture in 'Dark Age' Yorkshire", in M.O.H. Carver (ed.) *In Search of Cult - Archaeological Investigations in Honour of Philip Rahtz* (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 1993), 61-8.

⁴³ *ASCEY*, 221.

Anglo-Saxon period.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *op. cit.*, 237.

3.1 Written History

In 1979, Margaret Faull assessed the documentary evidence for Yorkshire between the fifth and seventh centuries. She concluded that it was “extremely fragmentary and difficult to interpret. Few sources having a bearing on that period, whether British or English, have survived and those that have are frequently biased, difficult to understand and sometimes contradictory.”⁴⁵ It is difficult to tell if the early sources for Northumbria were ever comparable in numbers with those for the South. However, that those which have survived to be used by modern scholars are far exceeded in extent by those from Southumbria is in no doubt. It seems reasonable to blame Viking disruption of monastic libraries and scriptoria for much of this. In any case the Anglo-Saxon culture which, by whatever means, emerged triumphant in Yorkshire by the middle of the sixth century was emphatically illiterate, and, for us, effectively prehistoric (although, of course we know it historically through contemporary writings by its literate neighbours, and by those of ‘Anglo-Saxons’ themselves from later periods).⁴⁶ It is only from the eighth century that there survives any written material on the early history of Yorkshire by an Englishman. It appears first in the anonymous life of Gregory the Great, written by a monk of Whitby in the early years of the century.⁴⁷ Slightly later, but of far greater import is Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*; alongside the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, it is the only major English source for this period, and it stands entirely alone in providing substantial information on Northumbria.⁴⁸

The scant English material is heavily outweighed by British sources. Prime amongst these is Gildas, Bede's main source, and, as he probably wrote in the late fifth or sixth

⁴⁵ Faull, *BSASY*, 14. Faull's assessment of the written sources is ageing, but remains the starting-point for all enquiry on the subject.

⁴⁶ Dumville, “The origins of Northumbria: some aspects of the British background”, 214.

⁴⁷ B. Colgrave (ed. and trans.), *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby* (Lawrence, 1968).

⁴⁸ *BSASY*, 17.

centuries, the only one with even the remotest claims to contemporaneity.⁴⁹ Gildas is, however, an extremely problematical and obscure writer and it is exceedingly regrettable that so much of the case for the history of the North and England as a whole, hinges upon him.⁵⁰ Apart from Gildas, the British sources are all late. The most important of these is the *Historia Brittonum*, formerly attributed to one Nennius, but which David Dumville has established as the work of an unknown compiler working around 829.⁵¹ It describes the history of Northumbria in the late sixth and seventh centuries, and incorporates the so-called 'Northern History' and the 'Saxon Genealogies', which are probably derived from an earlier English source.⁵² Perhaps associated with the *Historia Brittonum* (with a copy of which they are bound) are the Welsh annals known as the *Annales Cambriae*, dated to the mid-tenth-century but which were in part derived from an earlier set of northern British annals which went back to the later sixth century.⁵³ Lastly there are the early Welsh heroic poems, the most significant of which for Yorkshire is the *Gododdin*, attributed to Aneirin, which tells of an unsuccessful attack on *Catraeth* (normally taken for Catterick) by British warriors.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ On the problems of dating Gildas see M. Miller, "Relative and absolute publication dates of Gildas's *De Excidio* in medieval scholarship", in *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 26 (1974-6), 169-74, and, more recently and more fully, Higham, *English Conquest*, *passim*.

⁵⁰ The literature on Gildas and the problems in interpreting his works is massive, and has grown substantially in the last fifteen years. Amongst others see T.D. O'Sullivan, *The De Excidio of Gildas: Its Authenticity and Date* Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 7 (Leiden, 1978), Thompson, "Gildas and the History of Britain", Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend", 179 ff., Sims-Williams, "Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons", various papers in M. Lapidge and D.N. Dumville (eds.) *Gildas: New Approaches*, Studies in Celtic History (Boydell and Brewer: Woodbridge, 1984), Higham, *English Conquest*.

⁵¹ D.N. Dumville, "Some aspects of the chronology of the *Historia Brittonum*", in *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1974), 439-45, *idem.*, "'Nennius' and the *Historia Brittonum*", in *Studia Celtica* 10-11 (1975-6), 78-95.

⁵² Faull, *BSASY*, 19.

⁵³ Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain", 176, *BSASY*, 19.

⁵⁴ K.H. Jackson, *The Gododdin: The oldest Scottish poem* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1969). The identification of *Catraeth* with Catterick has recently been challenged (C. Cessford, "Yorkshire and the Gododdin poem", in *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 68 (1996), 241-243), but the case is as yet unproven. See P.R. Wilson, P. Cardwell, R.J. Cramp, J. Evans, R.H. Taylor-Wilson, A. Thompson and J.S. Wacher, "Early

None of these sources, of course, has very much explicit information on the extent and character of population movement. They are concerned exclusively with the military and political doings of the social élite; the Anglo-Saxon and British kings. The extent of low-status population movement, which is precisely the information that historians of migration have always craved, is obscured behind a general impression of ethnic replacement of Britons by English. This, however, should be seen as part of the normal predisposition of early medieval thought towards ethnic collectivities “which generally corresponded to political units of the time when the stories gained currency, but which were extremely unlikely to have had a single common descent.”⁵⁵ Equally commentators have not been able to use legal or charter evidence in any attempt to illustrate the alleged changes that the Anglo-Saxon migration brought to fifth-seventh century Yorkshire, as they have attempted for the Danish and Norman settlements, as such evidence does not exist. Indeed they have been hard put to it even to construct a basic chronological outline of events.

The Gildas Tradition

Most attempts to do so have revolved around the creation of a northern provenance for Gildas. His *De excidio Britanniae et conquestu* (the *DEB*) is our earliest and best-informed written source for the fifth century, and practically all later writers on the subject draw heavily upon it in their own work. Through the mediation of Bede, it is upon Gildas that the traditional modern historical narrative of the settlement is based. The *DEB* is also, however, a frustratingly vague and specious work, the avowed purpose of which renders it far from equal to meeting the demands placed upon it by historians both ancient and modern as a mine of reliable and disinterested information about an otherwise opaque period of history. Gildas's imperfections as an historian have long been recognised, but as his is practically the only written evidence we have for the period, necessity has waited upon methodological rigour, and historians have been loath to disregard his evidence entirely.⁵⁶

The section of the *DEB* – the historical preface – that has caught the attention of

Anglian Catterick and *Catraeth*”, in *Medieval Archaeology* 40 (1996), 1-61, 6.

⁵⁵ Reynolds, “Medieval *Origines Gentium*”, 378.

⁵⁶ Higham, *The English Conquest*, 123.

historians of the 'settlement' is but a part of a whole work, Gildas's "*admonitiuncula*", or "small work of admonition"⁵⁷, addressed to his peers, berating them for their impiety which, it argues, has led to defeat at the hands of the Saxons, sent by a vengeful God, and to their present woes. It urges upon them a return to morality and spirituality which will propitiate the Deity in their favour, with Whose aid they shall thrust out the Germans from Britain. It has been the effort of recent years to restore this context to the preface, and interpret what Gildas says therein in the light of his rhetorical aims.⁵⁸ This represents, however, a considerable departure from established historiographical tradition, dating back at least to the eighth century, that sought to wrest objective information from the preface of the *DEB*, almost regardless of the selection process by which it had come to be there. This tradition has been enormously influential and must be examined before turning to more modern interpretations.

The substance of Gildas's brief account of the advent of the English and their subsequent takeover of eastern and lowland Britain is extremely well-known and has been retold, with modifications, in Bede, the *Chronicle*, and subsequently in dozens, if not hundreds of nationalist histories of the origins of England. It tells of the departure of the Roman legions for involvement in internecine struggles and the defence of the empire on the Continent, and the subsequent degradation of Roman life in the British provinces, principally as a result of Pictish and Scottish raids (*DEB* 13-14). At first Rome answered British complaints in response to these with military aid against their northern antagonists but latterly such calls were met only with a suggestion that the Britons must organise their own defence (*DEB* 15-21). With this in mind, an unnamed British leader in the east of the island took the desperate and momentous step of inviting in German mercenaries, or 'Saxons', as Gildas calls them, to defend against aggressors (*DEB* 21-23.3). These were soon joined by a second, and uninvited, contingent of barbarians, and swiftly demanded increased supplies (*DEB* 23.4-23.5). When such were not provided to their satisfaction, they rebelled against their employers, breaking out and pillaging the whole island of Britain, and killing or

⁵⁷ Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, 1 (M. Winterbottom (ed. and tr.), *Gildas: the Ruin of Britain and other works* (Phillimore: London, 1976, 87).

⁵⁸ Most particularly Higham's *English Conquest*, but see also David Dumville's work and various of the essays collected in M. Lapidge and D. Dumville (eds.) *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984).

enslaving those of the inhabitants who did not flee before them (*DEB* 23.5-25.1). The British survivors regrouped after this initial shock and a period of spasmodic and inconclusive warfare between them and their enemies ensued, lasting until the year of the British victory at *mons Badonicus*, incidentally also the year of Gildas's birth (*DEB* 25.2-26.1). In the forty four years between that time and the writing of *DEB*, peace prevailed, at least between the British and the English, but the cities of Britain remained depopulated and racked by civil war (*DEB* 26.1-26.3).

This is the complete passage of events as described by Gildas, and as used by generations of later historians as an *historical* framework upon which to hang their descriptions of the period. It includes no absolute dates, and very little in the way of relative chronology, nor does it contain anything more than hints of any specific geographical location. This should not be surprising to us, Patrick Sims-Williams argues, for it is not necessary for Gildas's purposes as a prophet and moralist that the reader know more of British history than he chooses to disclose;⁵⁹ the ethical verities Gildas wished to propound were eternal and universal and too much specificity could only detract from his message. However this has presented all those later historians who have sought to use the *DEB* as their sole source for the fifth century with a problem, as a geographical and chronological context for the events it describes are essential for it to be usable as a statement of history. Consequently, from Bede onwards, scholars have spared no effort in attempting to pin Gildas's vague and general statements down to a particular period and locality, on the basis either of the handful of alleged clues that the text of the *DEB* can yield, or of the highly suspicious autonomous scraps of "tradition" about the man and his work preserved in later documents or in the hagiography produced by the monks of his cult church at St. Gildas de Rhus in Brittany.⁶⁰ Such concentrated industry has produced a plethora of contrasting or even conflicting results in the past 1200 years, according to their intended usage, the dictates of historical fashion, and the ability of the historian concerned, but, significantly, it has thrown up a number of abiding historiographical myths of the type against which David

⁵⁹ Sims-Williams, "Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons", 2.

⁶⁰ Higham, *The English Conquest*, 90-91.

Dumville has cautioned the unwary early medieval historian.⁶¹ Such models, he says, “develop lives of their own, improperly influencing subsequent work on the sources”, particularly when used by practitioners of disciplines other than documentary history, who may be unfamiliar with the primary sources themselves.⁶² Some of these demand attention here, as they place the events of Gildas’s narrative in a Yorkshire theatre and within a comparatively narrow temporal window. These continue to exert considerable historiographical influence; clearly, were they correct, we would possess in Gildas a source entirely specific to the sub-Roman period in Yorkshire, and hence first class evidence for the effects of migration into the area (if any).

The logic of the ‘northern Gildas’ is simple; it rests upon Gildas’s statement in *DEB* 19.I that the Picts and the Scots had seized *omnem aquilonalem extremamque terrae partem... muro tenus* (the whole of the extreme north of the island right up to the wall). Thompson interprets this as meaning that the chief threat from the northern barbarians was to the lands of the Roman province immediately to the south of their own, across the wall.⁶³ It only makes sense, therefore, if, on hearing of a renewed threat from the Picts and Scots, the Britons responded by installing their Germanic federate allies in these threatened areas – Thompson suggests the East Riding or the Vale of York –.⁶⁴ Thompson contends that the whole of Gildas’s narrative is devoted to this extremely localised area, and, indeed, speculates that the whole episode may have been of minor importance and rescued from obscurity only by the chance of Gildas’s interest in it.

However the ‘northern Gildas’ has been heavily criticised in recent years. Patrick Sims-Williams maintains that a northern bias is only detectable in part of Gildas’s writings, and that for the most part his aim is to generalize as much as possible about the whole of

⁶¹ Dumville, “Kingship, genealogies, and regnal lists”. The problem is also discussed in Dumville’s “Sub-Roman Britain: history and legend”, 173-192.

⁶² Dumville, “The origins of Northumbria: some aspects of the British background”, 213.

⁶³ Thompson, “Gildas”, 214.

⁶⁴ *op. cit.*, 217.

Britannia.⁶⁵ There are, according to Sims-Williams, pointers to Gildas's geographical perspective in the text in more than one direction, reflecting perhaps Gildas's inability to reconcile and conceal the original provenances of various different sources.⁶⁶ Nevertheless Sims-Williams adheres to Thompson's thesis as far as locating the settling of the Germanic federates goes, placing them in north-east England. Nick Higham's attack on the "northern" Gildas is far more all-embracing; he rejects the special pleading necessary to carve out a convincing case for Gildas referring particularly to the north, arguing instead that Gildas's central theme was the salvation of the whole of Britain, and hence that it was the downfall of the whole province that he charted in his historical introduction. Gildas himself Higham places in the South, perhaps in Wiltshire or Dorset.

None of these viewpoints on Gildas's geographical perspective has yet managed to win any more than the most guarded support. Gildas, as Patrick Sims-Williams points out, succeeds too well in his intent to generalize for the reader to be able either to fix his own position or to localise the events which he describes.⁶⁷ The hints and clues which litter his work have been sufficiently intriguing to encourage many commentators to conjecture on his geographical outlook but have proved to be too ambiguous, untrustworthy and even contradictory to allow any firm conclusions. The state of knowledge regarding the dating of Gildas is hardly in a better position. The moral truths which Gildas was attempting to impart did not need to be anchored in any particular chronological context. Hence the text of the *DEB* itself contains no fixed points which can be compared or verified against independent sources, only its own rough chronology relative to itself and the period of Gildas's own lifetime (which is, itself, unknown, although it is generally reckoned to lie towards the middle of the sixth century)⁶⁸. Like the location of the events described in the *De Excidio*, the dates to which they should be attributed has been the focus of research and (more recently) debate, starting only a few centuries after his death, and normally based

⁶⁵ Sims-Williams, "Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons", 7.

⁶⁶ *op. cit.*, 5-6.

⁶⁷ Sims-Williams, "Gildas", 7.

⁶⁸ Thompson, "Gildas", 203, Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain", 179, concur on this point. Against this see Higham, *English Conquest*, 118 ff., particularly 141, which suggests a date for the *DEB* early in the last quarter of the fifth century.

upon the chronological information which can be gleaned from the text of the *DEB*, which, as has been stated, is extremely limited.⁶⁹ Like the enquiry into his geographical perspective, the attempt to pin down the dates of Gildas and the *DEB* has proved largely fruitless, other than in the broadest possible terms. Without clinching proofs of any stricter absolute chronology, the *DEB* remains floating in a window from the last quarter of the fifth century (before which it cannot realistically be dated) and the *terminus ante quem* provided by Columbanus's reference to it in c.600.⁷⁰ No early resolution to the joint questions of the placing and dating of the events described in the *DEB* should be expected. The whole problem is a consequence of a desire to use Gildas as an historian in the modern sense, and pays little or no respect to the aims of his *admonitiuncula*, which were universal and eternal; the historian who seeks to wrest a time and a place for the narrative from the *De Excidio Britanniae* is condemned to labour against the best efforts of Gildas to conceal them. At some point it is necessary to accept that the narrative account provided by Gildas is effectively unusable as a framework for Yorkshire history in the fifth century.

A prehistoric Anglo-Saxon settlement?

The downfall of the Gildas tradition leaves a worrying gulf in the early history of Yorkshire. Recent studies of the county have, not surprisingly, treated it as largely or completely prehistoric in the fifth and most of the sixth centuries.⁷¹ From the late sixth century onwards however, written evidence becomes rather stronger, thanks largely to the British sources.⁷² In the 1970s, the data-starved historians of the Anglo-Saxon settlement lighted gratefully upon these both to provide evidence for 'English'-'British' relations in the age of Bede, and to cast a light (however dim) on the preceding period and save it from prehistory.⁷³ Nevertheless, they too have been subjected to a more sceptical and source-critical eye in the wake of Dumville's 1977 reassessment of their usefulness and the evidence

⁶⁹ Higham, *English Conquest*, 119.

⁷⁰ Sims-Williams, *op. cit.*, 5.

⁷¹ Higham, *Northumbria*, 61 ff., Lucy, *ASCEY*, passim.

⁷² Dumville, "The origins of Northumbria: some aspects of the British background", 219.

⁷³ *BSASY*, 484-488, Dumville, *op. cit.*, 219-222, Higham, *Northumbria*, 76 ff.

that they provide must be treated with considerable caution.⁷⁴

Most discussion has been based around the extent to which the shadowy British kingdoms, Elmet (the area to the west of the southern Vale of York, perhaps including *Loidis*, Leeds) and, more obscurely, Craven (the Pennines to the north of Elmet) structured the formation and development of the Deiran kingdom.⁷⁵ These probably survived as independent units to the end of the sixth century, and, in the case of Elmet, up to its conquest by Edwin of Deira in 617, and probably continued to function as administrative units within Northumbria considerably thereafter. Little or nothing is known of these kingdoms; what has been surmised from the sources is that the northern British societies were very much akin to those of the English. Both were supported by the labour of a large number of peasants (who are generally invisible in the written sources), but dominated by their kings and a warrior aristocracy (whose doings and ethos the written sources render rather more clearly). In these circumstances, it is argued, the annexation of the British kingdoms would represent only the substitution of one means of expressing warrior ideology for another, with little or no effect upon the mass of the population.⁷⁶ This could be achieved with only a minimal substitution of population – the replacement of the British aristocracy – whilst most of the British population gradually assimilated.⁷⁷ This process, however, is almost entirely invisible in the written sources.⁷⁸

To sum up, attempts to write a narrative history of Anglo-Saxon settlement in the North on the basis of the early medieval written records, which was the main goal of historians in the middle of the twentieth century, have largely foundered on the more source-critical approaches of the last twenty years. It should, on the other hand, be noted that historians have not altogether abandoned the Gildas tradition; David Dumville has said recently that it is an outline that, although not usable itself without further corroboration,

⁷⁴ Dumville, “Sub-Roman Britain”, Higham, *op. cit.*, 76-7.

⁷⁵ Faull, *op. cit.*, 485-6, Dumville, *op. cit.*, 220-1, Higham, *op. cit.*, 79-90.

⁷⁶ Higham, *op. cit.*, 102.

⁷⁷ Higham, *op. cit.*, 99.

⁷⁸ *BSASY*, 470.

is not necessarily incredible.⁷⁹ The Anglo-Saxon migration into Yorkshire is, however, without the benefit of any chronological outline for its earliest, and most important, stages. This has certainly encouraged archaeologists, such as Sam Lucy to treat the period as entirely prehistoric, as indeed they have been urged to do by the thinking of their discipline since the 1980s.⁸⁰ On the other hand, the inability of the written sources to provide any clear picture of the migration and the fate of the Romano-British inhabitants of Yorkshire has long been recognized by scholars, without seeing the need to reject documentary evidence entirely.⁸¹ Even if they can only provide a political history of Yorkshire in the later stages of the settlement, that is of considerable value, and the insight into the character of society that they provide must continue to be important in framing the agenda not just of historical, but of archaeological and linguistic enquiry. Nevertheless, it is in other types of evidence that the potential for major increases in knowledge lies.

⁷⁹ Dumville, "The origins of Northumbria: some aspects of the British background", 215.

⁸⁰ *ASCEY*, passim., Arnold, *Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England*. Barbara Yorke has noted the way in which some assumptions about Anglo-Saxon society derived from written history, in particular the importance of kings and warfare are employed by even the Newest of New Archaeologists: Yorke, "Fact or Fiction? The written evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries AD", 45.

⁸¹ *BSASY*, passim., Higham, *op. cit.*

3.2 Linguistic Evidence

Although linguistic evidence has definitely had a place in the interpretation of the 'Anglo-Saxon settlement' in Yorkshire, it has never been the most important data in that interpretation. Peter Hunter Blair did not use linguistic arguments at all in his reconstruction, and more recent commentators have tended to adopt the chariness towards linguistic and toponymic evidence that has been increasingly prevalent amongst early medievalists in recent years.⁸²

The problems which blight the study of post-Roman linguistic change in the country as a whole are rendered particularly acute in Yorkshire by the absence of early records. By the time that a written vernacular corpus of any size had arisen, the language change itself may well have been as much as three or four hundred years in the past. Thus, without contemporary written evidence, a picture of the process of change can be gleaned only through backwards extrapolation from later documents, place-names and personal names and from chance references to the tongue spoken by particular individuals. In Yorkshire, as elsewhere, debate on language change, when it has occurred, has tended to concentrate upon toponymy.

This raises a whole new set of problems for, as has been shown in chapter two, modern commentators see the formation, survival and recording of place-names not as a neutral process which objectively mirrors linguistic developments, but as complex and varied, affected by all manner of other processes and contingencies not, or not necessarily connected to language change, such as the degree of continuity or discontinuity in the settlement pattern or the early transmission of names to written form.⁸³ Place-names are thus far from ideal as evidence for language change, or settlement history, and it is most unfortunate that they have so dominated debate. The Yorkshire toponymic record,

⁸² BSASY, 208-210, Higham, *Northumbria*, 71, *idem.*, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 198-204.

⁸³ Stafford, *East Midlands in the Early Middle Ages*, 73-78, Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 190.

furthermore, has problems all its own. The destruction of early records from the area means that the first recording of all but a tiny minority of early medieval Yorkshire place-names is in *Domesday Book* in 1086, between 400 and 600 years after the period of the alleged English settlements.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Scandinavian settlement in the 9th and 10th centuries overlaid the pre-existing pattern with a further tier of Norse-derived toponyms (although caution should be observed in assuming that the replacement of existing place-names was directly related to, or affected by, the Scandinavian settlement; see section IV.2). It is perhaps for these reasons that scholars have been rather more cautious about integration of place-name evidence into general models of migration-period Yorkshire. Where intensive place-name study has been done in Yorkshire, it has concentrated on the Anglo-Scandinavian names, which have the virtue of a far greater proximity to the earliest written sources. There is nothing for the Anglo-Saxon migration discourse to match Gillian Fellows Jensen's monumental *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire*.⁸⁵

Completing the onomastic corpus is a tiny amount of anthroponymic evidence, generally restricted to males and the higher echelons of society. In sum the linguistic evidence for Yorkshire is rather insubstantial, but some comment does need to be passed on it, if only to illustrate how Yorkshire compares with the rest of England.

Language and Dialect

It is well-known that Old English as a whole contains less than a score, and perhaps only a dozen words loaned from British.⁸⁶ Whilst some of these survive as parts of regular speech today, a few now occur only in regional dialects, including that of Yorkshire, and Margaret Faull has attempted to ascertain if these survivals can suggest any greater tendency to British words peculiar to Yorkshire dialect. However her conclusions are essentially negative; the number of British words is tiny and the study is, in any case, based on a survey

⁸⁴ *BSASY*, 198.

⁸⁵ G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire* Navnestudier udgivet af Institut for Navneforskning 11 (Akademisk Forlag: Copenhagen, 1972).

⁸⁶ Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain*, 242-3, Gelling, "Why aren't we speaking Welsh?", 56.

conducted some 1300 years after the alleged borrowing.⁸⁷ The nouns that were borrowed into English were, on the whole, topographical terms and animal names, which, Faull believes, had no Germanic equivalents. As far as can be judged from the admittedly minuscule vernacular documentation, at the point where it enters the written record, the Northumbrian dialect was as firmly Germanic as any other variety of English; the considerable differences between Northumbrian English and the language of the rest of 'England' can not be ascribed to direct British influence or substrates.⁸⁸ On the other hand the process or processes by which language change occurred in Yorkshire are obscure in the extreme and it is unclear whether the end result was brought about in the same way as elsewhere, or if it was perhaps affected by the normative influence of the overwhelming success of English further south.

The question of how language transference took place became more important during the twentieth century as old Germanist beliefs in complete or large-scale ethnic replacement were increasingly seen as unsatisfactory.⁸⁹ Kenneth Jackson's classic description of the process of language change both showed how a surmised numerous group of British speakers could completely abandon their own language and adopt English and accounted for the apparent paradox of a considerable transmission of British place names at the same time as British itself was dying out as a spoken language amongst the whole population, indigenous and incoming, of England. According to Jackson this is explicable only by large numbers of Britons having learnt English thoroughly, to the extent that it entirely supplanted the British language. At some stage in this process there must have been a period where the Brittonic communities in question were bilingual. However they kept the two languages quite distinct; the almost-total absence of loan-words and the complete absence of phonological change attributable to Brittonic influence in Old -English, is conclusive proof that both languages maintained their own identity to a quite remarkable degree. Few of the

⁸⁷ *BSASY*, 193, 479.

⁸⁸ The question of English dialect formation is extremely complex and rendered very obscure by the absence of early written sources from many regions. See J. Hines, "Philology, Archaeology and the *adventus Saxonum vel Anglorum*", 29-33, T.E. Toon, "Old English dialects", in R.M. Hogg (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language* vol.1 The Beginnings to 1066 (CUP: Cambridge, 1992), 409-451, esp. 414-428.

⁸⁹ Jackson, *Language and History*, 229.

English are likely to have learnt very much of the language of their subjugated peers.⁹⁰ It is likely therefore that it was the bilingual British community that was responsible for many of the transfers of place names from British to English. The thoroughness with which that community learnt the new language is shown by the extent of sound-substitution that occurred as British phonemes were replaced by Anglo-Saxon ones; the Britons, Jackson says, “had to mangle their own names to suit the new language rather than the new language to suit their own sound-system”.⁹¹

Jackson himself suggested on toponymic grounds that British-speaking enclaves had survived in the Yorkshire uplands even after the main thrust of English expansion, and that the settlers of the Pennines and the Yorkshire uplands were probably not very numerous.⁹² However it was Margaret Faull who developed Jackson's views with specific regard to Yorkshire.

Place-Names

The EPNS surveys of Yorkshire place-names by A.H. Smith were amongst the earliest to be conducted by the society, in the full flood of early twentieth-century migrationism. Naturally Smith saw one of their prime purposes as shedding light on the relative proportions of ‘English’ and ‘British’, through a correlation of place-names in the two languages with members of the ethnic groups. Apart from the distorting influence of the Scandinavian names, the picture seemed unambiguous. The names of the East and North Ridings were overwhelmingly of English derivation, whilst those of the West Riding included a rather greater proportion of Brittonic-derived names,⁹³ although the picture was distorted by the fact that the North and East Riding volumes, of 1928 and 1937 respectively, did not include the field names and minor lost names that were recorded in the West Riding

⁹⁰ *op. cit.*, 243.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *op. cit.*, 197, 238.

⁹³ Smith, *Place-Names of the North Riding*, xv, *Place-Names of the East Riding*, xvii, *Place-Names of the West Riding*, vol. 7.

volume (of 1956-62).⁹⁴ Smith concluded that the names indicated massive settlement by Angles and minimal British survival in the North and East Ridings, but that in the West Riding the survival of the kingdom of Elmet into the seventh century and the larger number of British toponyms could imply some more substantial British survival.

Kenneth Jackson also observed the differences between the eastern and western parts of Yorkshire, but saw them in terms far more favourable to large-scale British survival. Plotting the frequency of Brittonic river names on a map of England, he divided the country into different areas from east to west.⁹⁵ He found that “by and large there is a striking correlation between the frequency of Brittonic versus English names and the periods of the conquest”; going from east to west, the numbers and proportion of recorded names recognisably Brittonic in form steadily increased, apparently corresponding to the chronology of conquest by the English as suggested by written history, and to the dwindling numbers of English-speaking settlers present as one proceeded west.⁹⁶ England was thereby divided into four areas, with Yorkshire falling into areas I and II. The East Riding shows the characteristics of Area I; with few pre-English names, these being mainly restricted to those of Romano-British towns, larger rivers, and some hills and forests; whilst the rest of Yorkshire is part of Area II; with more surviving pre-English names, including those of lesser rivers, hills, and forests.⁹⁷ In more recent years, the criteria by which the earliest English place-names were recognized by Jackson have come under steady and increasing assault⁹⁸ but throughout the middle years of the century his views carried enormous weight.

⁹⁴ *BSASY*, 199-200.

⁹⁵ Jackson's map was constructed on the basis of river names because, at the time, they were more thoroughly studied than other types of place-name. However he noted that other classes of name fitted well into the distributions he charted (Jackson, *Language and History*, 221.). Some forty years after he wrote, and following enormous increases in the volume of place-name data of all types, the authoritativeness of his map as a guide to the relative frequency of names in Brittonic and English has not significantly diminished.

⁹⁶ Jackson, *op. cit.*, 221.

⁹⁷ *op. cit.*, 221-5.

⁹⁸ For instance in Dodgson, “The significance of the distribution of the English place-names in *-ingas* and *-inga-* in south-east England”. See Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 198-204.

Margaret Faull was heavily influenced by Jackson in her interpretation of the British place-names of Yorkshire. It is extremely elaborate and dependent upon a comparison of the late Roman, post-Roman, and early English settlement patterns as evidenced by place name forms, archaeology and narrative written history. It is usefully summarised in a map which she has produced, based upon data on the quality of the land available in Yorkshire, and upon the geographical distribution of recorded Brittonic place names and the alleged earliest English place names.⁹⁹ She notes that Celtic place names in the East and North Ridings are both very scarce and peripheral in their distribution to concentrations of early English settlement. In the West Riding Brittonic place names are very much more common (although this may in part be attributable to the superior coverage of the West Riding EPNS volumes), but again their distribution and that of the early English place names seem mutually exclusive. In the Elmet region there is a heavy concentration of Celtic place names on the central block of land in between the Magnesian Limestone belt to the East (where the vast majority of the early English place names and burials are found), and the Pennines to the West, where there is an isolated small group of early English place names in the Aire and Wharfe valleys with only a few Celtic place names in their midst.¹⁰⁰

The distribution of surviving Celtic names throughout Yorkshire is noticeably at variance with the areas which display the strongest evidence for intensive settlement in the Roman period. In all three Ridings, the British names are at some remove from the main Roman settlement areas; the Wolds in the East Riding, the Howardian Hills and Wensleydale in the North Riding, whilst in the West Riding the Celtic names of the Elmet and Craven regions notably fail to correspond with any important Roman sites or known concentrations of settlement. Only two (*Eboracum* and *Cataractonium*) of the dozen-or-so known Roman place names in Yorkshire can be shown to have survived to later recordings: the others were renamed (although the famous mutations by which Roman *Eboracon* passed through Old English *Eoforwic* and Anglo-Scandinavian *Jorvik* on its way to becoming modern York must commend some caution).¹⁰¹ The general picture, however, is unambiguous; pre-English names do not survive in those areas in which the archaeological evidence of activity

⁹⁹ Faull, “British survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria”, 45, fig. 7a.

¹⁰⁰ *BSASY*, 200-201.

¹⁰¹ *op. cit.*, 198.

in the Roman period, and even in the post-Roman period, is strongest.¹⁰²

Faull rejects the notion that the marked lack of correspondence between these distributions can be explained by a drastic reorganisation of the settlement pattern, either in the post-Roman, or the early Anglo-Saxon period, which obliterated all the Brittonic settlements, and their place names with them. In itself, a change of such magnitude is inherently unlikely, especially given the demonstrable fact of early Anglo-Saxon settlements overlying fourth-century Romano-British sites.¹⁰³ Instead she claims that:

the Anglo-Saxons did not borrow Celtic names or else distorted them beyond recognition in areas where they settled immediately after taking control. But they did borrow them for places on the edges of those areas and in areas into which they expanded from their original nuclei of settlement.¹⁰⁴

She puts forward a three-phase interpretation of English settlement in Yorkshire; starting with the initial settlements in the Wolds, the Vale of Pickering, and on the north Yorkshire coast; expanding after the fall of York into the Howardian Hills, the Vale of York and Wensleydale; and culminating in English settlement of the West Riding, first into the Magnesian Limestone belt from which all Brittonic place names are absent, and then, after the conquest of Elmet in 617, into the western part of that region. In each case Faull notes the pattern of a strong concentration of English names in the centre of each new-settled area, with Celtic names confined to the periphery. Her explanation of this phenomenon is that, in the initial stages of settlement after the acquisition of new areas, there were few English speakers amongst the natives who might pass the local place names on to incomers. Even where British and English speaking groups were living alongside each other, the extreme differences of phonology between the two languages must have hindered communications considerably, certainly making it less likely that the English would adopt the local toponymy. Before the development of a bilingual group in the community, English names were coined for settlements and natural features in the immediate area. However,

¹⁰² Faull notes that apparent paradox that it is precisely in those few areas that *have* produced archaeological traces of post-Roman settlement that Brittonic place names are absent (*BSASY*, 202).

¹⁰³ *op. cit.*, 202.

¹⁰⁴ *op. cit.*, 203.

“by the time that the English had established overall supremacy in any particular area and started outwards expansion from their initial centres, sufficient Britons would have learnt English to pass on the names of places which had either been of little importance or far enough removed for the English not yet to have felt the need for them to be named.”¹⁰⁵ This, Faull believes, explains the distribution of surviving Brittonic names in the same general areas as the early English names and burials, but on the peripheries of those areas. However she resorts to a numbers argument in interpreting the survival of the English rather than the British names in the “primary settlement areas”, suggesting that this implies occupation by “considerable numbers” of “Anglo-Saxons”.¹⁰⁶

The usefulness of the linguistic evidence

To sum up, the linguistic evidence for the Anglo-Saxon migration is, to say the least, hard to interpret. The change from British to English occurred in Yorkshire between the fifth century and the ninth by a process, or perhaps rather more likely, a number of processes which are more or less obscured from us. The precise date of the beginning of these processes is shrouded in practically impenetrable gloom; in essence this is only the old *adventus Saxonum* question in a slightly different guise. Dating the completion of the change is barely less problematic. It is by no means impossible that there were still British speakers in Yorkshire at the time of the Scandinavian settlements, although they would have been scarce, and the social flux brought about by the conquest would probably have hastened their absorption into the wider community. As late as the early eleventh century there is mention, in Archbishop Wulfstan's compilation of the northern laws, of those described as ‘Welshmen’.¹⁰⁷ On the whole though, the general invisibility of British-speakers in the written record renders it very difficult to gauge their numbers, status or influence with any degree of precision.

Even having acknowledged the possibility of long-term survival of the British

¹⁰⁵ *op. cit.*, 204.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ D. Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents I, c. 500-1042* (Eyre and Spottiswoode: London, 1955), no. 52.

language, the pressures to learn English seem nevertheless to have been extremely strong. Apart from invasion on an implausibly vast scale, nothing else could explain the sheer comprehensiveness of the change from British to English. It seems clear that language could certainly be an extremely important indicator of ethnic affiliations, judging by the written and toponymic evidence. This view is reinforced by the remarkable extent to which the languages were kept separate. Each was clearly regarded as a cultural possession, to be kept intact as a symbol of identity. Even during the bilingual phase which is an integral part of the language change, the autonomy and distinctness of the two languages appears scrupulously to have been respected. However this role as ethnic identifier was frequently entirely subjective. The language spoken by the inhabitants of Yorkshire need not say anything about where they, or their parents or grandparents were born. With the poor quality of the Yorkshire evidence it is virtually impossible to say anything useful about the number of settlers or the character of the migration, beyond the basic facts that at least a few immigrants were necessary to introduce the English language and that they must have acquired considerable military, political or social prestige in order to make the speaking of English (and the assumption of an English identity) so desirable a cultural acquisition.

3.3 Archaeological Evidence

Introduction

From relatively inauspicious beginnings, archaeological evidence has come to carry increasing weight during the twentieth century in interpretations of fifth-seventh century Yorkshire. At the same time as the poverty of other types of evidence has come increasingly sharply into focus, the archaeological data have become both more substantial, through continued excavation, and better organised, and discussion of the archaeological evidence is now arguably the most important and dynamic part of the debate. In 1912, however, despite a large amount of barrow digging in the previous century, R.A. Smith's verdict on the state of archaeological knowledge of Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire was bleak: "with some notable exceptions, excavation has not proceeded on scientific lines or resulted in any important additions to our knowledge of Yorkshire thirteen centuries ago."¹⁰⁸ Smith's *Victoria County History* summary was the first serious attempt to gather all of the archaeological evidence for the settlement; given his stated opinions, it is not surprising that he made no attempt to develop any sort of interpretation of the settlement based upon it. From the publication of E.T. Leeds's *Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (1913) on, however, scholars began to have more confidence in the ability of the archaeological evidence to contribute to the history of the migration. In 1933, F. and H.W. Elgee's *The Archaeology of Yorkshire* not only summarised the archaeological record as it then stood, but sought to relate it to the traditional chronology of the settlement of Yorkshire as provided by Bede and the other written sources. Elgee and Elgee saw the material record as completely in accordance with the migration and settlement of large numbers of Germans, and specifically of Angles, in the fifth century.¹⁰⁹

In many ways the character of Yorkshire archaeological data and the ways in which they were interpreted were typical of British archaeology at the time. The excavated record in Yorkshire as elsewhere was completely dominated by burial evidence. The showy, and

¹⁰⁸ Smith, "Anglo-Saxon remains", 73.

¹⁰⁹ F. and H.W. Elgee, *The Archaeology of Yorkshire* (Methuen and Co. Ltd: London, 1933), 177-187.

easily identifiable, accompanied Anglo-Saxon burials had been a far easier target for the nineteenth-century antiquarians and barrow-diggers, and vast numbers had been excavated in the East Riding. Digs on settlements themselves were only just getting underway, with Congreve's and Corder's excavations at Elmswell, near Driffeld,¹¹⁰ and evaluations of settlement distribution were based entirely upon the distributions of cemeteries.¹¹¹ Equally, the basic technique of fitting the Archaeology around the chronology of Bede's migration story was typical of its time. In other ways, however, the archaeological evidence of Yorkshire was rather idiosyncratic; in sheer amount it could not match that from the South, and it seemed to diverge from that typical of the 'Anglian' areas of England, in that the predominant burial rite was not cremation but inhumation. Furthermore there was very little evidence found west of the Vale of York, prompting even the maximalist Elgees to suggest that the Britons of Elmet may have remained pretty much intact.¹¹²

1937 saw the publication of the massively influential book by Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain and the Anglo-Saxon Settlements*. Myres's part of it concentrated on the burial evidence for the English settlements, and, in particular, upon his speciality, the cremation urns of the 'Anglian' areas of England. He had already shown his interest in Yorkshire with a discussion of aspects of the historical evidence for the earliest settlement in 1935,¹¹³ and in *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* the massive cremation cemetery at Sancton, in the Yorkshire Wolds, came in for his particular attention. It was his belief that the material from Sancton and elsewhere could be used to make up for the deficiencies of the written record, and to write a history of the settlement of the North.¹¹⁴ He suggested that the settlement had come about through a gradual build-up of barbarian mercenaries or *laeti* stationed in the Wolds, and in particular around Sancton, starting as

¹¹⁰ A.L. Congreve, *A Roman and Saxon site at Elmswell, East Yorkshire*, Hull Museum Publications 193 and 198 (Hull Museum: Hull, 1937-8), P. Corder, *Excavations at Elmswell, East Yorkshire*, Hull Museum Publications 207 (Hull Museum: Hull, 1940).

¹¹¹ Elgee and Elgee, *op. cit.*, 177.

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ J.N.L. Myres, "The Teutonic settlement of Northern England", in *History* 20 (1935), 250-262.

¹¹⁴ Myres, *The English Settlements*, 20.

early as the fourth century.¹¹⁵ His particular concern, however, was with discerning the origins of the Germanic settlers through comparison of the decoration of English cremation urns with Continental examples.¹¹⁶ On these grounds, he put forward an amendment to Bede's picture of an Anglian settlement of Yorkshire, claiming that the urns from Sancton indicated settlement not only by Angles, but by Saxons and Alemans and other Southern Germans.¹¹⁷

Peter Hunter Blair was altogether more pessimistic about the archaeological evidence for the earliest period, complaining of the inadequacy of the excavators, their failure to record their excavations and the absence of a corpus of discoveries.¹¹⁸ It was his belief that, as things stood, the written record provided the only firm evidence for early Northumbrian history, and that the archaeology could act only as a guide to further excavation rather than as “something from which positive deductions can at present be made.”¹¹⁹ As late as the middle of the twentieth century, the usefulness of archaeology was under question. At best it was seen as capable of making some amendments to an established framework of history drawn from the written records. At worst it was seen as inconclusive and virtually unusable. The rise of archaeology to prominence in the interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Yorkshire is almost entirely a post-war phenomenon.

Crouched Inhumations and Romano-British Continuity

The first step towards a more organized archaeology of the Germanic settlements in Yorkshire came with the publication in 1964 of Audrey Meaney's corpus of Early Anglo-Saxon burials, which drew the known material together into a more usable form, and established the idiosyncrasy of elements of the East Yorkshire rite, such as the tendency to

¹¹⁵ *op. cit.*, 187.

¹¹⁶ *op. cit.*, 192-4. cf. J.D. Richards, *The Significance of Form and Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Cremation Urns* (BAR bs 166: Oxford, 1987), 24-5.

¹¹⁷ Myres, *op. cit.*, 194.

¹¹⁸ Hunter Blair, “origins of Northumbria”, 37-8.

¹¹⁹ *op. cit.*, 38.

focus whole cemeteries on prehistoric barrows.¹²⁰ However, in the late 1970s, Bruce Eagles, and, in particular, Margaret Faull constructed a new interpretation of the East Riding burials, that re-dated them, placed them in the context of long-term developments from the Roman period and before and claimed an extremely special character and meaning for the Yorkshire evidence.

Faull's interpretation was based upon the survival of what she took to be the characteristic burial rite of the area after the Anglo-Saxon migration, which, she suggested, implied both the survival of a substantial population of Britons and their ability to influence the 'traditional' Germanic burial rite in such a way that Yorkshire acquired its distinctive character in 'Anglian' England. From the Iron Age onwards, Faull argued, the inhabitants of East Yorkshire practised a rite with certain highly characteristic and recognisable features: bodies were placed in graves in a crouched or flexed position; graves were aligned roughly north-south; and graves were often constructed as stone cists. Bodies were sometimes accompanied by a few grave-goods, but often were not; deposition of objects is certainly not the most marked characteristic of the alleged 'traditional' Yorkshire rites.

In the Roman period, some new rites, such as burial in sarcophagi and extended burial, appeared in Yorkshire, but these new types, Faull suggested, were largely confined to the towns and garrison, whereas the rural bulk of the population retained their traditional practices substantially intact.¹²¹ The ritual, she maintained, showed no evidence either of change as a result of the presumed advent of Christianity to the area, and continued to be characteristic of Yorkshire throughout the late Roman and post-Roman periods. The latest examples come from the area of the Howardian Hills and areas to the west, i.e. in those areas not conquered by the English until the late sixth or seventh century.

From the second half of the fifth century onwards, however, the burial record of the eastern part of the county undergoes a profound change, which Faull and Eagles, like all

¹²⁰ Although isolated secondary burials in prehistoric barrows are known from Wiltshire and the Peak District, only in Yorkshire are large numbers of Anglo-Saxon graves so located. A. Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (Allen and Unwin: London, 1964), 18-19.

¹²¹ *BSASY*, 79.

before them, attributed to the arrival of Germans in the North. The first indication of the new mood is the appearance of a wholly new rite of burial; the appearance of cremation urns at Sancton, redated by Eagles to early in the third quarter of the fifth century on the grounds of their associated goods.¹²² The inhumation ritual too undergoes a significant change, with grave-goods accompanying burials becoming more common and more numerous. The goods themselves are of different types and styles from anything known previously; some graves are accompanied by weapons, whilst others yield jewellery and dress-accessories of startling complexity; cruciform brooches, small-long brooches, annular brooches, swastika brooches, wrist-clasps, scutiform pendants and silver bracteates.¹²³ This range of forms has close parallels in assemblages found both from graves in Lincolnshire and East Anglia (the other parts of 'Anglian' England), and from continental Germany and Schleswig-Holstein. The changes in burial ritual and the appearance of the cremation rite likewise echo similar developments in the burial and cultural habits of East Anglia and Lincolnshire earlier in the fifth century.

In the earliest period, Eagles noted, this Anglian material is very scarce indeed, and restricted largely to the Wolds.¹²⁴ The major thrust of Anglo-Saxon migration, he argued, had only occurred in the sixth century.¹²⁵ This is represented by a massive increase in the numbers and distribution of the new-style cemeteries, which Eagles, in the traditional way, equated directly with the expansion of the English. The distinctive distribution of these cemeteries, according to Faull, is indicative of the area settled by English migrants in the period before the English abandoned accompanied burial under the influence of

¹²² Eagles, *Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside*, 106, Higham, *Northumbria*, 66. Cremation was certainly known in the Roman period at, for instance, the Trentholme Drive cemetery at York (L.P. Wenham, *The Romano-British Cemetery at Trentholme Drive, York* Ministry of Public Buildings and Works Archaeological Report 5 (HMSO: London, 1968), P. Ottaway, *Roman York* (Batsford/English Heritage: London, 1993), 92) but it was discounted by Faull as foreign and ephemeral (*BSASY*, 79).

¹²³ Hines, *Scandinavian Character of Anglian England*, 13-14.

¹²⁴ Eagles, *op. cit.*, 241-2. See also E.T. Leeds and M. Pocock, "A survey of the Anglo-Saxon cruciform brooches of florid type", in *Medieval Archaeology* 15, 13-36, who put forward a similar thesis based on the evidence of cruciform brooches.

¹²⁵ Eagles, *op. cit.*, 241-2.

Christianity.¹²⁶ Despite a few outliers at York and on the edges of the Pennines, the vast majority of the new cemeteries are to be found in the East Riding, east of the Vale of York (which may have been largely waterlogged and marginal land).¹²⁷ They are distributed thickly along the Wolds, the Derwent Valley and the Vale of Pickering, and rather more thinly to the north, on the edges of the North York Moors. The area covered embraces some of the best quality land in the north of Britain and the most Romanised parts of the northern province.

A very few of the new cemeteries consist entirely or predominately of cremations, but these generally seem to have lasted only a few decades and then dwindled. Only Sancton survived, to become both by far the largest and the longest-lived cemetery in Yorkshire. The vast majority of the new cemeteries, however, predominately or entirely consist of inhumations. There are some 70 of these known, although most, unfortunately, were dug in the nineteenth century, and thus tend to have received inadequate and incomplete excavation and poor recording. The most recently-, and well-, excavated of these, that at West Heslerton, has produced more graves than any other (some 125), but it is not unreasonable to suppose that others might have yielded similar numbers of occupants given meticulous full excavation and modern retrieval techniques.¹²⁸

The crux of Faull's case with regard to the archaeological evidence lay in the various characteristics of the new burials in Yorkshire, which Meaney had already established as somewhat "odd".¹²⁹ Firstly there was the early predominance of inhumation, which is somewhat unusual in the so-called 'Anglian' areas with which Yorkshire shares much of its material culture.¹³⁰ Secondly, both single burials and whole cemeteries of the early Anglo-Saxon period are quite frequently found associated with prehistoric earthworks of various

¹²⁶ Faull, "Roman and Anglian settlement patterns in Yorkshire", 8.

¹²⁷ See Eagles, *Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside*, 49 ff. on late Roman flooding in the Humber basin and Vale of York.

¹²⁸ Higham, *Northumbria*, 68.

¹²⁹ *ASCEY*, 8.

¹³⁰ Faull, *BSASY*, 484. See also discussion in Hines, *Scandinavian Character of Anglian England*, 274.

sorts: Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age cemeteries and various linear earthworks. Although individual inhumations of this period secondary to Bronze Age barrows are also known from Wiltshire, Cumbria and the White Peak of Derbyshire, the East Riding is remarkable both for the numbers in which they occur, and for the incidence of whole cemeteries in such locations, which is unknown elsewhere.¹³¹ Thirdly, there is a high proportion of inhumations in a crouched or flexed position, unlike the rites employed south of the Humber, where extended or lightly flexed positions are the norm in inhumations, but very much akin to the rites alleged to have been used in Yorkshire in the prehistoric and Roman periods. Lastly, there are a significant number of what Margaret Faull calls ‘anomalous’ burials, which differ from the norm in various ways. Some of them seem to veer away from the normal west-east orientation of Anglo-Saxon burials towards one closer to the north-south orientation allegedly characteristic of late and post-Roman rites in Yorkshire. Other graves contain stone cists, or penannular brooches (an allegedly characteristically ‘British’ metalwork form), or bodies interred with their arms behind their head.¹³²

The combination of deviant features and characteristics allegedly similar to those of the British burial rite gives the early mediaeval burial record in Yorkshire an appearance rather different from that of any other part of early Anglo-Saxon England. Faull claimed that the British features of the rite must testify to an outstanding degree of continuity in the population, and even alleges that individual Britons can be recognised in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries on the basis of the material culture and rites associated with them.¹³³ The idea that crouched inhumation is suggestive of native survival has gained particular currency, and continues to enjoy consensual approval in the most recent publications on the subject.¹³⁴

Faull and Eagles's interpretations, coinciding, as they did, with the Dumvillean retreat from the written sources, established archaeology as the central means by which the settlement of Yorkshire could be characterised and recognized. Thenceforth, discussion of

¹³¹ Higham, *Northumbria*, 17.

¹³² *BSASY*, 82-85.

¹³³ *op. cit.*, passim. but especially 477-8.

¹³⁴ Higham, *Northumbria*, 70.

the 'Anglo-Saxon settlement' of Yorkshire would be based largely or completely upon archaeology, and, inevitably it was increasingly the methodological and interpretive developments within archaeology which drove debate on the Yorkshire settlement. Conversely, however, the principle established by the Yorkshire studies; that it was possible to countenance large-scale survival of Britons beneath a veneer of Anglo-Saxon material culture, came to be applied far more widely amidst the general reassessment of the Anglo-Saxon migration.¹³⁵ The alleged specialness of the Yorkshire settlement, which had been a feature of its interpretation for some considerable time, was thus called into question.

Despite the important changes that Faull's and Eagles's theses had made to the traditional interpretation of the archaeological evidence from Yorkshire, they were based ultimately upon the same two suppositions: that there is a correlation between ethnicity and mortuary behaviour, and that it is possible to recognise 'English' and 'British' burial customs. These lie behind the idea that it is possible to trace the progress of the English takeover of the north by observing the spread of 'Anglo-Saxon' burial rites, and the idea that the supposed oddities of the early Anglo-Saxon burial record in Yorkshire are indicative of British survival and continuity just as much as they underlie the notion that it is possible to trace the progress of the English takeover of the North by observing the spread of 'Anglo-Saxon' burial rites. Since the advent of New Archaeology, however, Anglo-Saxon archaeologists have become increasingly uneasy with the idea of any such fixed relationship between ethnicity and the usage of particular types of material culture.¹³⁶ They have laid emphasis instead upon the fluidity of ethnic identity and the way in which customs could be manipulated to construct and re-construct individual and group identities as the need arose.¹³⁷ Mortuary behaviour is thus seen not as pre-ordained and determined solely by the ethnicity of the occupant of the grave, but as a platform which can be manipulated (by those

¹³⁵ Perhaps most obviously by Nicholas Higham, who applied very similar arguments in consecutive years in the interpretation of the Yorkshire archaeological evidence (*Northumbria*, 1993) and that of England as a whole (*Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 1992).

¹³⁶ For example, M. Whyman, "Invisible people? Material culture in 'Dark Age' Yorkshire", 67.

¹³⁷ S.J. Lucy, "Early medieval burials in East Yorkshire: reconsidering the evidence", in H.M.Geake (ed.), forthcoming, 3.

arranging the burial, i.e. the deceased's family) to signal whatever they choose about the identity and status of their dead kinsfolk, and thus, of themselves.¹³⁸ Attention has thus tended to become focused away from the traditional concerns of establishing the ethnic identity of the occupants of graves towards attempting to understand the significance of the political and ideological signals which burial rituals were used to make. To take one influential example, Edward James showed in 1979 that the extension of the spread of Frankish *Reihengräber* cemeteries in Gaul reflected not the incursion of numbers of Germanic warriors, as had always been thought, but the extension of Frankish lordship over a wider area: the local inhabitants, regardless of whether they were Gallo-Roman or Frankish in descent, competed to emulate their lords in burial practice as this was one of the strongest means available to them of establishing their own status. This signalling, however, produced a record which showed a drastic and pronounced change towards “Germanic” burial customs.¹³⁹ The resonances with the situation in Yorkshire are very clear.

Ethnicity and Early Anglo-Saxon Burials in Yorkshire

John Hines's 1984 thesis was one of the first indications of the new mood. He showed that a number of female dress accessories commonly found in East Yorkshire and East Anglia are also found in Scandinavia, and specifically in western Norway. This he interprets as evidence of a range of types of contact, including migration, commercial contacts and ideological exchanges, continuing from the late fifth century through the sixth, and possibly continuing into the seventh century. They seem to have been initiated by the influx of a high-status group from Scandinavia who introduced a particular style of women's dress that was swiftly emulated in England and became the characteristic female national dress of ‘Anglian’ England.¹⁴⁰ After the introduction of Scandinavian influence by this means, he suggests that eastern England and south western Scandinavia continued to exert a considerable range of influences upon each other throughout the sixth century. Hines argues

¹³⁸ *op. cit.*, 8-9.

¹³⁹ E.F. James, “Cemeteries and the problem of Frankish settlement in Gaul”, in P.H. Sawyer (ed.) *Names, Words, and Graves: Early Medieval Settlement* (School of History, University of Leeds: Leeds, 1979), 55-89, 84-5.

¹⁴⁰ Hines, *Scandinavian Character of Anglian England*, 274-5.

for only a small initial influx of migrants, after which contacts of all sorts flourished between the two areas and sustained Anglian England's Scandinavian character, yet, as Carver and Higham have pointed out, the artefactual evidence on which his hypothesis is based is of a similar character to, and certainly no weaker than, the artefactual evidence used to argue for mass migration from Germany and Schleswig-Holstein¹⁴¹. Much of the Hines thesis is as relevant to the penetration of Yorkshire by the culture of continental Germany as it is to that by Scandinavia, especially in demonstrating the way in which, once bridgeheads had been established in England for the transmission of culture by the migration of a high-status group, the further spread of that culture within the region by emulation, acculturation and other means could be accomplished relatively easily and without the need for further substantial population movement.¹⁴²

Nicholas Higham, too, has incorporated the new views in his interpretation of the Yorkshire evidence. He believes that 'Germanic' ritual was used in early Anglo-Saxon England by those of immigrant and native stock alike to signal Germanic (or at least non-Romano-British) identity. To do otherwise and emphasise the Romano-British origins of one's kindred, in a society in which Anglo-Saxon culture and 'Anglo-Saxons' were dominant, would be to court discrimination.¹⁴³ The distinctive cemeteries recognised as 'Anglo-Saxon', he argues, represented only a tiny minority of the population, with the agricultural poor more-or-less unrepresented in the known cemetery record, as they had been in the Roman period.¹⁴⁴ Access to the 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries was restricted to the social elite, and if the descendants of Britons succeeded in gaining access to them, their burials should be expected to be as orthodoxly 'Anglo-Saxon' as possible. The Yorkshire

¹⁴¹ M.O.H. Carver, "Kingship and material culture in early Anglo-Saxon East Anglia", in S. Bassett (ed.) *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 141-158, 148, Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 179.

¹⁴² Hines, "The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England: An Update", in M.O.H. Carver (ed.) *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, 315-329, 317.

¹⁴³ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 184.

¹⁴⁴ *op. cit.*, 185. James Campbell has recently argued that the known cemetery record may represent as little as 0.2-1% of the population of early Anglo-Saxon England ("The Lost Centuries: 400-600", in J. Campbell (ed.) *The Anglo-Saxons* (Phaidon Press: London, 1982), 20-44, 29.

evidence, with all of its peculiarities, is best explained, according to Higham, as indicative that “local knowledge of Anglo-Saxon rites was flawed, and the entire social hierarchy was predominantly British.”¹⁴⁵ Thus Higham adopts an approach to the burial record that concedes that the recognition of individual Britons or Anglo-Saxons may well be impossible, but which surmises a complex political situation from the messages which burial evidence is used to convey. He applies this furthermore in explanation of the rapid expansion in numbers of Anglo-Saxon graves in the sixth century after their rather tenuous beginnings in the fifth, a phenomenon which has occasioned much comment. In effect there are three possible mechanisms which could account for it: further migration, a rapid increase in the numbers of English in Yorkshire by fast breeding, and acculturation. Bruce Eagles, equating ‘Anglo-Saxon’ grave culture directly with the presence of Anglo-Saxon migrants, gives no hint that any other factor besides migration might have been significant.¹⁴⁶ Nicholas Higham, on the other hand places far more emphasis upon internal causes. He believes that the success of the English in gaining their initial foothold in Yorkshire sucked in large numbers of recruits from the local population who hoped to gain patronage and booty in the service of victorious English leaders. The rapid increase in numbers of ‘Anglo-Saxons’ that this brought about was exacerbated by the polygamous marriages of the English which allowed the swift production of new generations of warriors.¹⁴⁷ Little further evidence is forthcoming to show which explanation is to be favoured and prudence would seem to demand that all three may have taken a part in the process. Once the Germanic presence in Yorkshire had been established and seen to be successful, it is reasonable to suppose that it would have encouraged recruits from all sources, internal and external, eager to share in the profits.

Sam Lucy's thesis on the East Yorkshire cemeteries goes far farther than Higham in rejecting the identification of ethnicity by mortuary behaviour, and betrays strong traces of the basic processual antipathy to migratory explanation. Hers is an attack both on the practical and theoretical justification for the extrapolation of the ethnic identity of early Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire from the burial record, and an appeal to shift attention towards

¹⁴⁵ Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 184.

¹⁴⁶ Eagles, *Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside*, 241-2.

¹⁴⁷ Higham, *Northumbria*, 68.

other statements of identity that mortuary behaviour may have been manipulated to construct.

Firstly she sets about severing the alleged link between crouched inhumation and 'British' ethnicity, which was the mainstay of Faull's, Eagles's and Higham's arguments regarding the burial evidence.¹⁴⁸ Examining those East Yorkshire cemeteries with a high proportion of crouched or tightly flexed burials: Uncleby, Garton Station and Garton II she notes certain unusual features that set them apart from the other cemeteries of the area; a majority of the burials are oriented towards the west, and the goods accompanying them seem to be of those types that Geake has suggested belong to the later sixth and the seventh centuries.¹⁴⁹ On this basis she dates these cemeteries to this period, going on to say: "It seems nonsensical to suggest that such practices can therefore represent "native survival", as crouched burial is not the dominant rite in the preceding two centuries."¹⁵⁰

The second part of Lucy's attack on the traditional interpretation of the Yorkshire burial evidence is more fundamental and is born of the theoretical developments discussed above. She maintains that it is necessary to focus on the role of the mourners as the active participants in directing the ritual associated with burial, rather than on the corpse, who can have no say in proceedings. The treatment of the corpse is, she argues, "a powerful symbolic medium" manipulated by mourners "to express and thereby transform, aspects of the dead and also the living".¹⁵¹ Lucy rightly endorses an approach which embraces all aspects of the rite employed; not just the grave-goods, but the positioning and orientation of the body in the grave, the structure of the grave and its relation to others in the same cemetery, and the location of cemeteries within the landscape, both natural and human. Using this technique she has shown that, despite broad similarities of grave-goods and practice, the users of no two cemeteries in the area buried their dead in exactly the same

¹⁴⁸ BSASY, 77-88, Eagles, *op. cit.*, 46, Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, 184, *idem.*, *Northumbria*, 70.

¹⁴⁹ H.M. Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England, c. 600-c. 850 A.D.* (Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of York).

¹⁵⁰ Lucy, "Early Medieval Burials in East Yorkshire", 8.

¹⁵¹ *op. cit.*, 9.

way. Variations are most marked between those cemeteries dated from the fifth to the late sixth century (Lucy's type A) but was also notable to a lesser degree in those of the late sixth to the seventh century (Lucy's type B).¹⁵² All the cemeteries showed clear signs of attempts to signal differing identities of their occupants, for instance their age or gender, through rites or zoning, but again the ways in which these differences were signalled seem to have varied from cemetery to cemetery.¹⁵³ The overall impression is not of the signalling of broad national or ethnic identities, but of extremely localised allegiances. According to Lucy, this is further demonstrated by the appearance of the crouched inhumation rite in the late sixth and seventh century cemeteries. This coincides with a trend towards grave-goods with a distribution across the whole of Anglo-Saxon England, which Geake interprets as an attempt to symbolise a national "English" identity.¹⁵⁴ However, Lucy believes that this was merely an elite phenomenon, and that those outside the elite, by practising crouched burial, contributed to the statement of a more localised identity.¹⁵⁵

This, obviously, leaves no place whatsoever for migration in explanation of the changes in burial ritual going on in the East Riding, and indeed, Lucy specifically excludes it as a significant dynamic.¹⁵⁶ In her work, the anti-migrationist backlash has reached its fullest extent. Nevertheless, it has not yet won wide attention or acclaim and seems to leave a number of important questions unanswered. Firstly it does not adequately account for the adoption of cremation, which Lucy suggests was "an attempt by the inhabitants of the area to symbolically [sic] distance themselves from Roman ways of burial, and thus from Roman ways of life".¹⁵⁷ Cremation, however, was a complex and skilled art, that required not only considerable resources in terms of fuel and manpower but also demanded considerable

¹⁵² Lucy, *ASCEY*, 106-7.

¹⁵³ Lucy, "Early Medieval Burials in East Yorkshire", 9.

¹⁵⁴ H.M. Geake, "Burial practice in seventh- and eighth-century England", in Carver (ed.), *Age of Sutton Hoo*, 83-94, 92.

¹⁵⁵ Lucy, *ASCEY*, 228.

¹⁵⁶ *op. cit.*, 221-232.

¹⁵⁷ *op. cit.*, 226, 185.

technical capabilities.¹⁵⁸ The urns too are by no means a simple and easily-produced artefact type. Julian Richards has shown that an extremely complex symbolic vocabulary was employed in the form and decoration of Anglo-Saxon cremation urns to communicate messages about the age, gender and status of the deceased, each urn being specially produced for its occupant. Less well-researched are the continental cremation urns but similar forms of decoration amidst the general pattern of minor differences between individual urns must argue for a similar system there. Richards suggests that the holders of this substantial and detailed knowledge of funerary symbolism may have held a mystical and possibly privileged place in society.¹⁵⁹ To argue, despite this considerable body of evidence that shows that the cremation rite, *when it entered Yorkshire*, was a highly developed and complex mortuary behaviour which required the skill and knowledge of a significant class of people, and the active participation of a greater number, that it was invented *de novo* by the inhabitants of the Wolds as a symbol of their un-Romanity is to strain the bounds of credibility beyond all endurance.

Secondly, the re-occurrence of the distinctive crouched inhumation rite, even after a gap of two centuries (if such it was) seems suggestive, and Helen Geake has offered two alternative explanations for it. There is, by definition, little evidence to prove the case, but it must remain a distinct possibility that the crouched inhumation rite *did* survive throughout the fifth and sixth centuries, but only in contexts where it has been difficult to date and recognise; for instance in single unaccompanied inhumations beside Roman roads (echoing Roman practices). Only with the acceptance of the rite into archaeologically recognisable and datable contexts (i.e. ‘Anglo-Saxon’ cemeteries) did it become highly visible.¹⁶⁰

Alternatively, it is possible that the crouched inhumation rite had indeed passed out of use at some point in the fifth century, but that, in an attempt to assert legitimacy and *romanitas* in the newly-formed English kingdom of Deira, it was deliberately invoked, and

¹⁵⁸ J.R. Kirk, “Anglo-Saxon Cremation and Inhumation in the Upper Thames Valley in Pagan Times”, in D.B. Harden (ed.) *Dark-Age Britain: Studies presented to E.T. Leeds with a bibliography of his works* (Methuen: London, 1956), 123-31, 126-7.

¹⁵⁹ Richards, *Significance of Form and Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Cremation Urns*, 207.

¹⁶⁰ H. Geake, pers. comm.

used by the social elite much as Lucy suggests, in order to signal their Deiran identity as against the other English and British kingdoms.¹⁶¹

These criticisms, together with Lucy's failure to explain the process of language transference, must render her thesis highly questionable.

Settlement Evidence

Besides the development of increasingly sophisticated approaches to the more-or-less static corpus of burial evidence, the increasing importance of archaeology is a function of a substantial growth in excavation of settlements, and increasing interest in the development of the landscape. Just as in the rest of England, settlement archaeology was slow to develop in Yorkshire, and, when settlement patterns were considered, they tended to be surmised from the distribution of cemeteries.¹⁶² Following Congreve and Corder's excavations at Elmswell, the development of settlement archaeology in the region was very gradual, with limited excavations at Crossgates (near Seamer) between 1947 and 1956,¹⁶³ Wykeham (1951-2),¹⁶⁴ Kemp Howe, near Cowlam (1969),¹⁶⁵ and a number of excavations at Catterick.¹⁶⁶ In 1984, Margaret Faull's review of this evidence, and of the whole issue of analysing change in the settlement pattern associated with the migration was overwhelmingly gloomy. The 'Anglo-Saxon' sites were few and uninformative and those of the 'Romano-

¹⁶¹ H. Geake, pers. comm.

¹⁶² Elgee and Elgee, *Archaeology of Yorkshire*, 187, Faull, "Roman and Anglian settlement patterns in Yorkshire", 7, C. Hills, "The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England in the pagan period", 310.

¹⁶³ J.G. Rutter and G. Duke, *Excavations at Crossgates near Scarborough 1947-1956* (Scarborough and District Archaeological Society Research Report 1: Scarborough, 1958).

¹⁶⁴ Only published 13 years later in J.W. Moore, "An Anglo-Saxon settlement at Wykeham, North Yorkshire", in *YAJ* 41 (1965), 403-44.

¹⁶⁵ T.C.M. Brewster, "Cowlam, Kemp Howe", in *Medieval Archaeology* 13 (1969), 241, Faull, *BSASY*, 303.

¹⁶⁶ Wilson et al., "Early Anglian Catterick and *Catraeth*".

British' practically unknown.¹⁶⁷ However the years since then have seen both the introduction of considerable newly-excavated or published material into debate and modification of the interpretive frameworks through which it is viewed, making Yorkshire arguably as significant for post-Roman settlement and landscape studies as it is for burials.

Perhaps the most important development of all has been a greater appreciation of the ways in which the late and post-Roman landscape changed in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, long before any plausible date for foreign incursions.¹⁶⁸ These have lessened the alleged differences between the 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Romano-British' settlement patterns. Simultaneously Mark Whyman has criticised the whole approach of looking for 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Romano-British' in the settlement evidence, which he believes, is responsible for generating "invisible people"; the archaeologically-absent Romano-British of the fifth-seventh century:

The material of the Dark Age people of Yorkshire is the material we have, whether found in cemeteries or on settlement sites. Previous study has tended to ascribe each category of material to an ethnic group and a historical event. But suppose the material culture was available to all, and was adapted and adopted by indigenous people as times changed? We could then abandon our preconceptions as to what it ought to look like, and our expectations of an arena where two cultures collide, and look instead for a new meaning for what there actually is.¹⁶⁹

Whyman's intentions with regard to the settlement evidence are very much the same as Lucy's for the cemeteries; they both wish to remove the notion of the 'ethnicity' of various categories of material culture, and to replace the traditional model which sees change in Yorkshire largely as the consequence of the clash of two fundamentally opposed ethnic groups. Nicholas Higham does not go as far as this; however he too has noted the

¹⁶⁷ M.L. Faull, "Settlement and society in North-East England in the fifth century", in P.R. Wilson, R.F.J. Jones and D.M. Evans (eds.), *Settlement and Society in the Roman North* (School of Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford: Bradford, 1984), 49-56, 51.

¹⁶⁸ R. Cramp, "Anglo-Saxon settlement", in J.C. Chapman and H.C. Mytum (eds.), *Settlement in North Britain, 1000 BC-AD1000* (BAR bs 118: Oxford, 1983), 263-97, 265, Higham, *Northumbria*, 43-61.

¹⁶⁹ Whyman, "Invisible People?", 63.

seeming inability of archaeology to recognise anything other than that section of the populace that it has labelled 'Anglo-Saxon'.¹⁷⁰ Increasingly it is becoming hard to accept the thesis of agrarian and settlement discontinuity as an indication of migration and population replacement; the evidence to support such a proposition simply does not exist.

Settlement Hierarchies and the Landscape

The characteristic high-status features of *Romanitas*, the towns and the villas, had never penetrated far beyond the Vale of York in the north. In the fourth century, it was to systemic change, rather than barbarian assault that they were to prove susceptible. There are a number of indications of gradual but long-term decline in the economy of the north and in the town and villa life that it supported in the late fourth century.¹⁷¹ The industries producing the goods which accompanied and constituted definitively Roman manners of life went into a terminal spiral with the towns and villas they supplied. Finally and decisively, the import of coinage ground to a halt in the early years of the fifth century; by c.420 it had ceased altogether, though coin may have circulated for some time thereafter.¹⁷²

It is still extremely difficult to characterise life in York and the other towns in the late fourth century. The archaeological record is very unclear, but what there is in York points to a substantial change in patterns of usage of the defended area after about 380, with civilians perhaps taking up residence in the fortress, and many buildings falling into evident disuse, although the construction of houses and mosaics seems to have continued in to the very late fourth century at least.¹⁷³ What are far more clearly apparent from the archaeological record are a series of disastrous floods which swept away the bridge, cutting the city in two, and, quite possibly, bringing about the end of its economic life, as Eagles

¹⁷⁰ Higham, *op. cit.*, 102.

¹⁷¹ Faull, "Settlement and society in North-East England in the fifth century", 49.

¹⁷² J.P.C. Kent, "The end of Roman Britain: the literary and numismatic evidence reviewed", in P.J. Casey (ed.) *The End of Roman Britain* (BAR bs 71: Oxford, 1979), 20-42, 21.

¹⁷³ P. Ottaway, *Roman York* (B.T. Batsford Ltd./English Heritage: London, 1993), 111-117.

suggests.¹⁷⁴ By the early fifth century, whatever type and scale of existence was carried on in and around the walls of York was far removed from anything that could be described as urbanism as it had been understood in the third or early fourth centuries. Although, of course, the details differ, the same general conclusions can be drawn of the lesser towns of the province; Aldborough (*Isurium Brigantium*), Brough-on-Humber (*Petuaria*) and Catterick (*Cataractonium*).¹⁷⁵ Well before the middle of the century, the nature of occupation at those sites had changed to the extent that it is incorrect to think in terms of an urban tier of settlement in Yorkshire from this time.

Change was just as much evident in the country. Although some villas were still occupied at the turn of the fourth century, no more were being built, and others were abandoned or converted to subsistence usage.¹⁷⁶ The highly Romanized villas were tied into the same system of market-oriented production that also supported the towns. When this system plunged into decline and the currency collapsed, villa life could no longer be sustained. Although occupation may have continued at certain villa sites, it must have been of a rather different (perhaps even, in some cases, a monastic) character.¹⁷⁷

Thus, by the first half of the fifth century, the elite settlements and mode of life which, if anything did, constituted the Roman-ness of the area, had ceased to exist. With them vanish the archaeologically visible traces of a specifically Roman identity. After this period it becomes increasingly hard to trace rural settlements; with the collapse of the coinage, dating becomes increasingly imprecise. The only means of identifying settlements is by finds of Late Roman pottery, which itself disappears at some point in the fifth century. Traditionally it has been thought that pottery production could not long survive the collapse of the monetary economy, and its demise was seldom placed later than the second or third decade of the fifth century. It was argued that sub-Roman Britain entered a new phase, aceramic and remarkable for the poverty of its material expression, which only ended with

¹⁷⁴ Eagles, *Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside*, 192.

¹⁷⁵ Faull, "Roman and Anglian settlements in Yorkshire", 4.

¹⁷⁶ Higham, *Northumbria*, 52.

¹⁷⁷ *op. cit.*, 53.

the eventual, but (once it had started to occur), rapid adoption of the characteristic early Anglo-Saxon material culture.¹⁷⁸ Mark Whyman, on the other hand, has argued that it is actually the magnetism of the last horizon of easy dating by coin evidence (c.420) that has massively truncated the span of the Late Roman ceramic tradition in archaeologists' interpretations, and caused them to attribute to the early decades of the century pottery which continued in use right up to the periods in which the early Anglo-Saxon types became available.¹⁷⁹ If this is so, then the postulated gap between recognisable "Romano-British" and "Anglo-Saxon" settlements disappears.

Perhaps the most important point to note about settlement variability and hierarchies in the period is that changes were taking place before, and independently of, any indications of the presence of an intrusive population. The early Anglo-Saxon landscape did not replace a Roman one which was in any way intact, but developed from settlement patterns geared to post- or sub-Roman conditions. There can be no possibility of assessing the impact of settlers on the strength of changes in the settlement hierarchy.

Contrasting with the changes in settlement was the apparent general continuity in patterns of land-use right through from the Roman period to the Middle Saxon. There is certainly no evidence for cataclysmic change or the dramatic reafforestation that might accompany precipitous demographic decline. On the contrary, there is evidence at Wharram Percy and West Heslerton for the continued use of boundary systems that seem to have been Roman or even prehistoric in origin.¹⁸⁰ Land, it would seem, continued to be exploited in much the same way that it always had been. Whatever was the scale of the input of incoming populations on other areas of culture, on agricultural production it was practically nil.

Conclusions

¹⁷⁸ A.S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain* (B.T. Batsford: London, 1989), 172-187.

¹⁷⁹ Whyman, "Invisible People?", 63-4.

¹⁸⁰ Higham, *Northumbria*, 74.

To sum up, the archaeology has, in the course only of the last twenty years, come to be paramount in investigation of the transition from 'Romano-British' to 'Anglo-Saxon' in Yorkshire. The debate over the role of migration in that transformation directly reflects the ongoing archaeological debate between those unreconstructed processualists who would deny the significance of migration altogether and those who still retain some role for it in their explanations of change.¹⁸¹ It also represents part of the identity crisis which continues to trouble early medieval Archaeology: should it align itself with prehistory, and claim the whole 'migration period' as prehistoric, or rebuild some of its ties with History, and allow itself to use other types of evidence? For the time being, however, at least in Yorkshire, the multi-disciplinary approach has prevailed.

Perhaps lost in the course of debate has been any sense of the regional difference of Yorkshire, which was so emphasized by Margaret Faulk and Bruce Eagles. Both Nick Higham and Sam Lucy have generalised from their Yorkshire results to the whole country.¹⁸² Yet the scarcity of the 'Anglo-Saxon' archaeological material for Yorkshire and its undeniable idiosyncrasies point to differences of some sort in the scale and significance of migration. It would be desirable were further study (perhaps study in the alleged Anglo-Saxon heartlands of the South and East) to restore Yorkshire to the status of a regional model.

¹⁸¹ cf. Hamerow, "Migration theory", 174.

¹⁸² Note the parallels between *Northumbria* and *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*. Lucy, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire*, 232.

3.4 Discussion

The tradition of study on the Anglo-Saxon migrations in Yorkshire that has been examined here is perhaps not entirely typical of the wider Anglo-Saxon settlements discourse, but it certainly illustrates the impact which different types of disciplinary study and new theoretical approaches have had upon interpretations of migration over the last hundred years or so. Most obviously during that period there has been a gathering trend in favour of greater and greater British survival, which, in the very recent past (the last fifteen years) has turned into a far more fundamental questioning of the significance of migration as a whole. However, in Yorkshire, as elsewhere, this has occurred alongside, and perhaps largely as a consequence of, a range of changes in the way in which knowledge of the 'Romano-British' and 'Early Anglo-Saxon' periods is constituted.

Perhaps most important of these is change in the relative importance of practitioners of different disciplinary methods in constructing the picture of events. Although every type of evidence; historical, linguistic and archaeological, has, at one time or another been used to shed light on the nature of the Anglo-Saxon migration into Yorkshire (evidence of any sort is so scarce that scholars have been obliged to use everything that they can), over the past twenty years there has been a drastic lurch away from documentary evidence and towards archaeology. This is the consequence both of increased excavation, which has enlarged understanding of the material culture in general, and of settlement and landscape in particular, and of increasingly sceptical attitudes towards the early written sources. The enlarged influence of archaeology has brought with it many of the rather ambivalent attitudes towards migration that have been particularly (although by no means solely) a characteristic of early medieval archaeology in the 1980s and 1990s. The debate that has emerged over the relevance or otherwise of migration to post-Roman change carries with it one of the big issues currently facing study of the early Anglo-Saxon period; is it prehistoric or not? It is no coincidence that those who still retain a place for migration as a dynamic (albeit with ample scope for Romano-British survival, conceivably on an overwhelming scale) are also those who retain some place, however small, for written and linguistic data in their interpretations; Eagles, Faull and Higham, whereas those who seek to deny the importance of migration altogether are also those who restrict themselves to explanation of the archaeological data (Lucy, and to a far lesser extreme, Whyman).

A Yorkshire Perspective?

As regional study became established (effectively from the foundation of the *Victoria County History of Yorkshire* in 1907), a natural point of enquiry was whether the Anglo-Saxon settlement in the county was in any way special, or stood out from the broader national picture. Indications both from the documentary and archaeological records did, indeed, seem to suggest that there were differences from the situation farther south, with, perhaps, a greater degree of Romano-British continuity and influence on early Anglo-Saxon culture, and an abiding tradition of the 'specialness' of Northumbria began to emerge. It is perhaps hard to tell to what extent this was associated with the development and redefinition of Northern and Yorkshire identities in the twentieth century,¹⁸³ but it is certainly notable that those most closely associated with the idea of a distinctive Northern settlement were themselves northerners (Hunter Blair) or were based in the North (Faull).¹⁸⁴

It is precisely because of the peculiarities of the Yorkshire record that it has been a proving-ground for ideas about the extent and visibility of the Romano-British in early Saxon England which have later been applied nationally. To this extent it has been a particular focus for general theoretical development, and in the forefront of new thinking on the Anglo-Saxon settlement. On the other hand, it remains important to retain a regional perspective and note the substantial differences that exist between Yorkshire and the South East before applying models of the settlement derived from Deira or Bernicia to England as a whole.¹⁸⁵ If H.W. Böhme's thesis on the Anglo-Saxon settlement of East Anglia is correct, it points to migration of a different sort and at a considerably earlier period than any which can be surmised for Yorkshire,¹⁸⁶ yet it produced a society with a similar culture, language

¹⁸³ See H.M. Jewell, *The North-South Divide: The Origins of Northern Consciousness in England* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1994).

¹⁸⁴ P. Hunter Blair, *Northumbria in the Days of Bede*, M. Lapidge, "Foreword", in M. Lapidge and P. Hunter Blair (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Northumbria* (Variorum: London, 1984), i-iv, i.

¹⁸⁵ Hamerow, "Migration theory", 174-5, C. Hills, review of Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, in *Antiquity* 66 (1992), 988-9.

¹⁸⁶ H.W. Böhme, "Das Ende der Römerherrschaft in Britannien und die Angelsächsische Besiedlung Englands im 5. Jahrhundert", in *Jahrbuch des Romisch-*

and place-names which were no more 'Germanic' than those of most of Yorkshire. Interdisciplinary study and inter-regional comparison remain perhaps the best means of shedding light upon this convergence.

Chapter 4: The Viking Settlement

4.0 Introduction

The Viking Settlement: a 'New' Migration Discourse?

It was noted in Chapter 2 that, unlike the Anglo-Saxon settlements and the Norman Conquest, there was no long history of study of the Scandinavian migration to England. Serious study of the consequences of Viking settlement commenced late in the nineteenth century, and then only in the Danish of J.C.H.R. Steenstrup, which Stubbs could stigmatize as “lucubrations...in an unknown tongue.”¹ It was only in the years around 1900 that Englishmen started to devote their energies and historical scholarship in any systematic way to understanding their Scandinavian inheritance.² That is not to say that a belief in the impact of the Scandinavians in the ‘peopling of England’ ever entirely disappeared;³ Defoe, for instance, in disputing the purity of his contemporaries’ Anglo-Saxon descent, could write:

The Romans first with Julius Caesar came,
Including all the Nations of that Name,
Gauls, Greeks, and Lombards; and by Computation,
Auxiliaries or slaves of ev'ry Nation.
With Hengist, Saxons; Danes with Sueno came,
In search of Plunder, not in search of Fame...

...All these their Barb'rous offspring left behind,

¹ Hutton (ed.), *Letters of William Stubbs*, 189. The first attempt to gather the evidence for Scandinavian involvement in England was J.J.A. Worsaae's *Minder om de danske og nordmændene i England, Skotland og Wales* (Copenhagen, 1851), but despite an English translation in the following year (as *An account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Murray: London, 1852)), its influence was limited. More significant was J.C.H.R. Steenstrup's *Normannerne* (Copenhagen, 1876-82), later joined by Alexander Bugge's *Vikingerne* (Copenhagen, 1904-5).

² Stenton, “Early English history”, 353-4.

³ Stenton, *op. cit.*, 353, C. Fell, “Norse studies: Then, now and hereafter”, in Faulkes and Perkins (eds.), *Viking Revaluations*, 85-99, 87.

However, in general, when Vikings were alluded to by English historians before the twentieth century, they appeared only as villainous barbarians, and as foils for the great hero King Alfred; their migration and settlement was largely discounted and ignored.⁵ Reasons for this are manifold. The Danish settlement could not be presented as ethnogenetic like the arrival of the English, nor did it seem to have the constitutional significance of the Norman Conquest. Scandinavians had settled in only a part of England (the so-called 'Danelaw'), and the subsequent English 'reconquest' of the area made the whole episode appear as an evanescent aside in an otherwise unbroken march of Anglo-Saxon history. Most importantly of all, the Vikings in England had failed to produce an historian; their deeds were known almost solely through the hostile eyes of West Saxon chroniclers, and so long as modern commentators continued patriotically parroting the views of those chroniclers, the Danes were guaranteed short shrift.⁶

On the other hand, the nineteenth century had seen a Europe-wide reawakening of interest in the heroic Scandinavian past, associated with the Romantic movement.⁷ In England the 'Viking Myth' found expression both in the saga translations of William Morris and his circle, and as an almost everyday symbol in written and artistic culture.⁸ The Vikings had thus become an established part of the pan-Germanist pantheon. J.R. Green was by no

⁴ D. Defoe, *The True-born Englishman* (1706), 11 (quoted in MacDougall, *op. cit.*, 75-6). Cf. R. Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology in Britain and Ireland* (Shire Publications: Princes Risborough, 1995), 7.

⁵ Fell, *op. cit.*, 87.

⁶ P. Wormald, "The ninth century", in Campbell (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons*, 132-157, 134.

⁷ D.M. Wilson, *Vikings and Gods in European Art* (Moesgård Museum: Moesgård, 1997), 51-64.

⁸ J.L. Barribeau, "William Morris and saga-translation", in R.T. Farrell (ed.), *The Vikings* (Phillimore and Co: London and Chichester, 1982), 239-255, K. Eldjárn, "The Viking myth", in Farrell (ed.), *op. cit.*, 262-73, 271-2, D.M. Wilson, *Vikings and Gods in European Art* (Moesgård Museum: Moesgård, 1997), *passim*, See A.F. Service, *Popular Vikings: Constructions of Viking Identity in Twentieth Century Britain* (unpub. D.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1998).

means alone in picturing them as the ‘second wave’ of the English:

The Danes were the same people in blood and speech with the people they attacked; they were in fact Englishmen bringing back to an England that had forgotten its origins the barbaric England of its pirate forefathers.⁹

Although study of the Viking settlements itself was new in the early decades of the twentieth century, it could draw upon a tradition of thought about early medieval migration that was both well-established and highly politically-charged.

Frank Stenton and the ‘traditional interpretation’

The starting-point, inevitably, for study of the Viking settlement in Yorkshire was the *Chronicle's* terse and laconic statement that in 876 “Halfdan shared out the land of the Northumbrians, and they proceeded to plough and to support themselves.” However, mere repetition of this and similarly brief statements from other narrative sources did not satisfy the new generation of Viking historians such as E. Ekwall, E.V. Gordon, Allen Mawer, or (above all) Frank Stenton, who were starting their careers in the early years of the twentieth century. They sought to cast light upon the character, intensity and extent of the settlement (about which the narrative histories said almost nothing) using a whole range of sources which had not previously been used for any such purpose. The technique applied was simple; on the grounds of differences perceived in *Domesday Book* and other sources (i.e. some 200 years after the alleged settlement) between eastern and western England, it was claimed that Danish settlers had wreaked profound and lasting change on the society, culture and language of much of the Danelaw, and that this could be explained only by settlement not just by a social élite, but by large numbers of peasants.¹⁰ Scandinavianisation was said

⁹ Green, *Short History*, 42.

¹⁰ E. Ekwall, “The proportion of Scandinavian settlers in the Danelaw”, in *Saga Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* xii (1937-45), 19-34, F.M. Stenton, “The Danes in England”, in *Proceedings of the British Academy* xiii (1927), 203-46 (repr. in D.M. Stenton (ed.), *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, 136-65), *idem.*, “The free peasantry of the Northern Danelaw”, in *Bulletin de la Société royale des Lettres de Lund* 1925-6, 73-185 (repr. as *The Free Peasantry of the Northern Danelaw* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1969)).

to be particularly visible in the northern Danelaw (Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and the East Midlands), where it could be seen in large numbers of Norse-influenced place- and personal-names, distinctive legal and administrative systems and nomenclature, a number of large multi-vill estates (described as 'sokes' in *Domesday Book*) and the presence of many free peasants (the 'sokemen' of *DB*). These characteristics were treated as a direct index of the intensity of Scandinavian settlement. Where Norse place-names and sokemen were thickest, there, it was alleged, immigration had been heaviest.¹¹ Clearly this was based upon a direct correlation of culture and ethnicity; when F.M. Stenton described Danelaw society as "abnormal in structure and unique in racial composition", the association of the two statements in his mind is very evident.¹²

As is perhaps seldom recognised,¹³ the construction of the maximalist orthodoxy was the work not just of Stenton but of a large group of scholars working in various fields; Ekwall, Erik Björkman, Otto Jespersen, Mawer, Gordon and many others. Scandinavians were particularly prominent amongst them; their involvement heralded a long and close association of English and Scandinavian historians of the Vikings, which has never disappeared, and has perhaps encouraged the tendency to maximise the extent of Viking influence upon England.¹⁴ Also extremely significant was the close association of the historians of the Viking settlement with place-name studies. Ekwall, of course, was the doyen of pre-war English place-name studies, but it is notable that Mawer and Stenton were also prime movers in the foundation of the English Place-Name Society and edited most of the early volumes of its survey.¹⁵ The influence of place-name studies upon the interpretations of the Viking settlement was immense and lasting, and heavily overshadowed even the other linguistic evidence, which also seemed to indicate a very great Norsification

¹¹ Hadley, "And they proceeded to plough", 70.

¹² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 513.

¹³ e.g., Hadley, *op. cit.*, 70.

¹⁴ Note, for example, the links fostered by the international Viking Congresses since 1950, and the associations of such scholars as Gillian Fellows Jensen and even Peter Sawyer with Scandinavia.

¹⁵ See K. Cameron, "Stenton and place-names", in Matthew (ed.), *Stenton's Anglo-Saxon England Fifty Years On*, 31-48.

of English culture.

Missing from the traditional interpretation of the settlement, however was any very major role for archaeology. Despite the fact that scholars had been able to recognise Viking material culture in England since the early nineteenth century,¹⁶ the all-important grave finds had been very few, and archaeology took a far lesser place than it did in the Anglo-Saxon migration discourse for much of the twentieth century, although there was a significant and early role for the art-historical study of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture, particularly in Yorkshire. This was largely due to the efforts of W.G. Collingwood.

As Ruskin's secretary W.G. Collingwood represents a link between the pre-Raphaelites and twentieth-century scholarship. From 1907 to his death in 1933 he dedicated his life and work to the study and publication of the archaeological evidence for the Vikings in the north, and above all to the stone sculpture.¹⁷ As well as his *magnum opus* *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age*, he published five articles between 1907 and 1914 on the archaeological material from Yorkshire, concentrating above all upon the stone sculpture found in great abundance in the county.¹⁸ Collingwood laid the foundations for the systematic tradition of Anglo-Scandinavian archaeological scholarship in England; his lead was followed by Haakon Shetelig, who in 1940 published a large catalogue of Viking-Age antiquities in Britain, and subsequently the tradition flourished and expanded.¹⁹ It is significant, however, that in its earliest stages this tradition had been concerned with the

¹⁶ Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology*, 7.

¹⁷ R.N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (Collins: London, 1980), 28.

¹⁸ W.G. Collingwood, "Some illustrations of the archaeology of the Viking Age in England", in *Saga Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* 5 (1907), 108-41, "Anglian and Anglo-Danish sculpture in the North Riding of Yorkshire", in *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 19 (1907), 266-413, "Anglian and Anglo-Danish sculpture at York", in *YAJ* 20 (1909), 149-213, "Anglian and Anglo-Danish sculpture in the East Riding", in *YAJ* 21 (1911), 254-302, "Anglian and Anglo-Danish Sculpture in the West Riding", in *YAJ* 23 (1914), 129-299, *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* (Faber and Gwyer: London, 1927).

¹⁹ H. Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland, vol.4 Viking Antiquities in England* (1940).

classification and dating of the sculpture; it imbued it with a strongly art-historical perspective which it has never entirely lost.

The interpretation of the settlement of Yorkshire followed similar lines to that for the rest of the northern Danelaw. It was the first area of the Danelaw to be surveyed by the EPNS, with A.H. Smith's volumes on each Riding, which were rather cagey about the character of the settlement but clearly believed that place-names could give a good picture of the areas of settlement by Danes and Norwegians. A more thoroughly maximalist view was presented by E.V. Gordon in his assessment of Scandinavian influence on Yorkshire dialect, which pronounced that the county was predominantly Scandinavian in blood even after the Norman Conquest.²⁰ However, there were problems with the Yorkshire evidence, mainly thanks to the nature of the Yorkshire *Domesday*, which was confused and uninformative. In particular the sokemen, upon whom Stenton laid such emphasis, were largely absent from the *DB* record for Yorkshire; he explained this, however, as a result of damage inflicted during the Norman conquest of the area, alleging that “the harrying of Yorkshire in 1069 makes it impossible to argue with security from 1086 to the conditions of the Confessor's day.”²¹ Otherwise, however, the county seemed to have unimpeachable Scandinavian credentials.

Like the Anglo-Saxon settlements, the Danish migration was known through an impoverished narrative record that acknowledged the fact of settlement but little more. To add to this, however, there was the relatively extensive corpus of Norman documents (and most important amongst them, *Domesday Book*), which, it was alleged, could provide good evidence of the effects of Scandinavian settlement on the society and economy of the areas where it had occurred. Alongside the written historical evidence, there was considerable linguistic and toponymic data which was just starting to be collected and studied in earnest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. However, despite the fact that scholars had

²⁰ E.V. Gordon, “Scandinavian influence in Yorkshire dialects”, in *Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society* 24 (iv) (1923), 5-22, 21.

²¹ F.M. Stenton, “Types of manorial structure in the Northern Danelaw”, in *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History* vol. 2, 3-96, 4, *idem.*, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 516.

been able to recognise Viking material culture since the early nineteenth century,²² the all-important grave finds had been very few, and archaeology took a far lesser place than it did in the Anglo-Saxon migration discourse for much of the twentieth century, although there was a significant and early role for the art-historical study of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture.

There were, then, both close parallels and differences between the types of evidence available for the Anglo-Saxon and Danish settlements, but the sorts of questions that the historians of the twentieth century asked of this evidence were frequently practically identical; how many settlers were there? Were they a social élite or drawn from all ranks of society? How had newcomers and indigenes acculturated to each other's ways and how long had the process taken? The links between the two migration discourses have continued throughout the twentieth century, for they have followed broadly similar theoretical and methodological trajectories, although there have been considerable discrepancies in the ways and the pace at which they have each changed. In disciplinary terms, debate on the Viking settlement has, like that on the Anglo-Saxon settlements, seen a vast increase in archaeological input and a correspondingly greater importance for archaeological modes of interpretation, although it has occurred a lot more recently and more suddenly, and, thanks to the generally superior quality of the written evidence for the later episode, the scale of the paradigmatic shift has never quite attained the same proportions. There has also been, in the course of the twentieth century, a shift away from a maximalist interpretation of settlement towards models involving a rather smaller and socially-narrower population movement, although the Viking settlement discourse has never seen the sorts of extremes of either maximalism or minimalism that have occurred in discussion of the 5th-7th centuries. On the other hand, it is important not to underestimate the many differences between the two migration discourses. The Viking settlement has never attracted the level of attention that has been routine for the Anglo-Saxon migration, and it is not here that the main battle-lines in the recent dispute over the status of population movement have been drawn up. Equally, new types of thinking on ethnicity have, perhaps surprisingly, had almost no impact on thought about the Viking settlement. Whilst comparison of the two discourses and movement of ideas from one to the other has been one of the most important and frequent dynamics for both of them, this contact has been unsystematic and subject to

²² Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology*, 7.

the whims of academic fashion, sometimes becoming very close and at other times being practically non-existent.

Yorkshire and the Viking Settlement

Of the areas affected by the Scandinavians, it is the northern Danelaw: Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and the East Midlands, that have traditionally been seen as the most intensively settled.²³ Yorkshire, certainly, stands out as an area in which Scandinavian cultural influence seems particularly marked; in the language, with large numbers of Norse or Norse-influenced place- and personal-names; in the archaeology, with the sizeable corpus of stone sculpture; and in the laws and institutions by which it was run.²⁴ Politically, York was the first kingdom capital to fall to Scandinavian assault (in 866), and Yorkshire, according to the written sources, was, in 876, the first area of England to be extensively settled. It was, furthermore, the last region to hold out against the tenth-century 'reconquest' of Danish England by the West Saxons. It is thus by the dates of the Viking kingdom of York, 866-954, that the period of strongest Scandinavian influence and settlement is conventionally defined, the so-called 'Viking century'.²⁵ Of course, Scandinavian involvement in England (and Yorkshire) started long before this, in the late eighth century, and continued to the late eleventh,²⁶ and it has lately been suggested that there may have been some not insubstantial migration associated with Knutr's conquest of England in the eleventh century.²⁷ However, this, if it did occur, did not affect Yorkshire, and, for the most part, the late ninth and early tenth centuries are the focus for all work on the Danish migration.

²³ F.M. Stenton, "The free peasantry of the Northern Danelaw", 506.

²⁴ P.V. Addyman, "Introduction", in R.A. Hall (ed.), *Viking Age York and the North* (CBA Res. Rep. 27) (CBA: London, 1978), 1-3, 1, Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 508-12.

²⁵ A.L. Binns, *The Viking Century in East Yorkshire* (1963).

²⁶ See D.M. Wilson, "Archaeological evidence for the Viking settlements and raids in England", in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 2 (1968), 291-304, 291, on the various phases of Viking activity in England. Compare J.D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (B.T. Batsford/English Heritage: London, 1991), 16-28, G. Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (OUP: London, 1968), 218, 240, H.R. Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1994), 30.

²⁷ A. Williams, "'Cockles amongst the wheat': Danes and English in the western Midlands in the first half of the eleventh century", in *Midland History* 11 (1986), 1-22.

The principal figure in the formulation of this thesis was F.M. Stenton, and in his 1943 classic *Anglo-Saxon England* the emergent maximalist thesis had its culmination and its classic statement.

As one commentator wrote in 1975, at the time of its publication it had seemed unlikely “that it would ever be necessary to make major adjustments to the view of the Scandinavian settlements that [Stenton] presented.”²⁸ Although this was swiftly shown to be in error, the magisterial authority of Stenton's work in its first (1943), second (1947) and third (1971) editions, and the clarity of its statement of the maximalist case have ensured that it continues to be influential, and frequently cited in discussion of the question.²⁹ Stenton's shadow no longer dominates as it formerly did, but it remains an eminence grise lurking in the wings of Anglo-Scandinavian scholarship.

Peter Sawyer and the Minimalists

The publication in 1958 of Peter Sawyer's essay “The density of the Danish settlement in England”, and (especially) in 1962 of his book *The Age of the Vikings* represent a watershed of such significance in work on the Viking period that it is by no means inaccurate to speak of “pre-Sawyer” and “post-Sawyer”; his thesis was the starting point of all discourse on the subject for the next twenty five years and more.³⁰ However his was not the first voice to be raised against the maximalist orthodoxy of Stenton; already in 1955 R.H.C. Davis had questioned whether the evidence of names and landholding could indeed

²⁸ G. Fellows Jensen, “The Vikings in England: a review”, in *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1975), 181-206, 181.

²⁹ For instance, in Fellows Jensen's important review of the settlement issue: “The Vikings in England”. More recently, Stenton is described as “an important work of reference for Scandinavian activity in England”, in P. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe AD 700-1100* (Routledge: London and New York, 1982), 153. Sawyer and Stenton are named jointly as the best authorities by which to trace the settlement question in H. Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1994), 122.

³⁰ P.H. Sawyer, “The density of the Danish settlement in England”, in *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, vol. vi, no. 1 (1958), 1-17, *The Age of the Vikings* (1st edn.) (Edward Arnold: London, 1962). C.P. Wormald, “Viking studies: whence and whither?”, in R.T. Farrell (ed.), *The Vikings* (Phillimore: London and Chichester, 1982), 128-153, 128-9 stresses the division of Viking study into pre- and post-Sawyer epochs.

demonstrate the systematic settlement of East Anglia by the Danes, and in 1956 A.L. Binns had suggested that the Vikings might have taken over English settlements very much as going concerns.³¹ Nevertheless, neither of these achieved the controversy or fame of *The Age of the Vikings*, which effectively demolished the whole basis of Stenton's case concerning numbers.

Sawyer's reassessment was not particularly concerned with new or archaeological evidence, but rather was based upon a reassessment of the trustworthiness of the available written evidence and of the uses to which it had been put. The evidence of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle with regard to the size and destructiveness of the Danish armies was clearly suspect – its clerical authors had no interest in understating the extent of the heathen threat – and was frequently extremely vague.³² Nor were the much-vaunted Domesday Book sokemen necessarily any more useful a guide to the relative scale or importance of the Danish-born or descended population of eastern England; Davis had already shown that the Danish settlements and Domesday sokemen did not correspond as closely as Stenton had supposed.³³ Sokemen were absent from Yorkshire on a scale that not even William the Conqueror's devastation could explain. Besides, the sokemen could as easily be seen as native Englishmen whose social, legal and economic status had been altered by the conquests as supposing them to be the descendants of Danes.³⁴ The linguistic and place-name evidence cut no further ice with Sawyer than did the historical; he argued that Old Norse and Old English were mutually comprehensible, that Scandinavian speech had survived in parts of England until at least the eleventh century, and that the language of these areas had remained Scandinavianized far later even than that.³⁵ Names of apparently Scandinavian form might represent alterations of English names or new coinings from as late as the thirteenth century, and in any event were dangerous grounds upon which to draw any

³¹ R.H.C. Davis, "East Anglia and the Danelaw", in *TRHS* 5th series, 5 (1955), 29-39, A.L. Binns, "Tenth century carvings from Yorkshire and the Jellinge style", in *Universitet i Bergen Årbok 1956, Historisk antikvarisk rekke* 2 (1956), 1-29.

³² Sawyer, "density", 3 ff.

³³ Davis, *op. cit.*, 36.

³⁴ Sawyer, *op. cit.*, 2.

³⁵ *op. cit.*, 9.

conclusions regarding the ninth-tenth century settlement.³⁶ Likewise, the Scandinavian personal names of Domesday Book can sometimes be shown to have been borne by men of English descent (with obvious implications for those place-names viewed as Scandinavian on the basis of a personal-name element) and again, can not be seen as indicative of the relative presence of 'Danes' in the Danelaw. The relative uselessness of these types of evidence only emphasized the negative evidence provided by the archaeology of the time, which had produced practically no evidence of the 'traditional' Danish pagan burial rites in England.³⁷ In sum Sawyer concluded that the ninth century Danish armies could be reckoned in hundreds rather than thousands, and that the notion of a large-scale "migration" was a misinterpretation of the evidence based on historians' assumptions that large numbers were needed to cause a substantial effect.³⁸

One scholar who was influenced by Sawyer was Glanville R.J. Jones, who had been developing since the 1950s the theories about early mediaeval territorial organisation which would eventually come to be known as the "Multiple Estate Model." This put forward the view that pre-Viking (and indeed pre-Saxon) lowland Britain was everywhere divided into large territories with a range of resource-types, that formed the basic unit by which the land was exploited. In a paper published in 1965 he made the case that the large soke territories of Yorkshire had similarities with various other such territories in Britain and were to be identified with the ancient multiple estates.³⁹ Effectively Jones turned Stenton on his head; he argued that, far from being a Danish innovation, the sokes were indicative of continuity with the English and the Celtic past. The incoming Danes, whom he saw as numbering only in the hundreds, had taken over these estates relatively intact as going concerns, and the best means of exploiting the land, dividing them up between the members of the army, whilst their leaders took control of the estate centre. This, Jones suggested, explained the estate centres normally retaining their English names, whilst their appurtenant villages took on

³⁶ *op. cit.*, 10.

³⁷ *op. cit.*, 7.

³⁸ *op. cit.*, 16-17.

³⁹ G.R.J. Jones, "Early territorial organization in northern England and its bearing on the Scandinavian settlement", in A. Small (ed.), *The Fourth Viking Congress* (Oliver and Boyd: London and Edinburgh, 1965), 67-84.

names consisting of the Scandinavian element -by compounded with a Scandinavian personal name.⁴⁰

The multiple estates model has, of course, been widely accepted albeit with some criticisms. Its development was part of a general trend towards landscape history that emphasized continuity and tended to minimize the effects of conquest and colonization. The recognition that the vast majority of lowland Britain had not been left unexploited at an early stage in particular had a strong effect on later work by Peter Sawyer.

Sawyer's views were extremely provocative and stimulated a swift reaction from all sides. His chief achievement had been to show that the written records alone could not be relied upon to give a full description of the settlement. In this sense at least, if in no other, his case was accepted by all sides, and became, in a sense, an integral part of a new orthodoxy. In other ways, however, Sawyer's criticisms of Stenton came under forthright attack. Most significantly, his contention that the considerable Viking influence indicated by various types of evidence need not imply large numbers of settlers was frequently criticised. Those of a maximalist viewpoint clung to the idea that the 'abnormalities' in Danelaw society, culture and language meant a heavy settlement of Scandinavians. If, as Sawyer had shown, the armies could not be deemed sufficiently large to have constituted these settlers, then they must be sought elsewhere, in historically-invisible contexts.

It was place-name experts and philologists, impressed by the sheer quantity of Scandinavian influence in their subject matter who spearheaded the resurgence and reformulation of the maximalist thesis. Kenneth Cameron, in the first of three seminal papers on the place-names of the Five Boroughs, made a case that the sheer weight of "Scandinavian" place-names necessitated the presence of significant numbers of settlers, and claimed that there must have been a subsequent migration from Scandinavia under the aegis of the armies "for at least two generations."⁴¹ Cameron's ideas were taken up by Gillian

⁴⁰ *op. cit.*, 83-4.

⁴¹ K. Cameron, *Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the five boroughs: the place-name evidence*, Inaugural lecture, University of Nottingham, 1965, repr. in K. Cameron (ed.) *Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements* (EPNS: Nottingham, 1977), 115-138. Cameron developed his ideas further in

Fellows Jensen in her major study of the Yorkshire place-names; she wrote with the explicit intention of finding “what the place-names of Yorkshire can reveal about Scandinavian settlement in the county”, and with pronounced maximalist leanings.⁴² In prolific publications on the subject since then Fellows Jensen has proved to be easily the most articulate advocate of a maximalist interpretation of the settlement, exerting such an influence that her name is inseparable from study of the Yorkshire place-names and the maximalist interpretation.⁴³ The ‘two-stage’ theory of settlement put together by Cameron and Fellows Jensen won rapid acceptance, and is probably still the most widely-supported interpretation of the settlement.⁴⁴ In some ways indeed, the collapse of the necessity to see the settlers as those described in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle made support for a maximalist interpretation easier. No longer was there any need to compress the settlement into a limited number of great landtakings; the settlement could instead be portrayed as a migration over a long period of time, thus allowing for the movements of very large numbers of people without the need to postulate extreme circumstances causing them – and without the need to produce any evidence to support the case –. More importance could (rightly) be ceded to the movements of the Hiberno-Norse from the west, which had been rather neglected by practitioners of written history, despite the substantial archaeological evidence. Nor was the case for intensive settlement dependant any longer upon indications of a military character to that settlement.

Sawyer and the minimalists responded in turn to the restatement of the maximalist

“Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the five boroughs: the place-name evidence, part II, place-names in thorp”, in *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 3 (1970), 35-49, and “Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the five boroughs: the place-name evidence, part III, the Grimston-Hybrids”, in P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (eds.) *England Before the Conquest. Studies in primary sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (CUP: Cambridge, 1971), 147-163; both are reprinted in *Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements*.

⁴² G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire* Navnestudier 11 (Institut for Navneforskning: Copenhagen, 1972), 1, v.

⁴³ The most important of Fellows Jensen's papers on the settlement question is undoubtedly “The Vikings in England: a review”.

⁴⁴ As early as 1968, Gwyn Jones was citing the ‘two-stage’ interpretation of the settlement (*A History of the Vikings*, 221-2). Likewise it was the position taken up by Donald Logan (*The Vikings in History*, 166) as recently as 1991.

case, most significantly in the second edition of *The Age of the Vikings*.⁴⁵ Amidst somewhat heated debate, the battle lines of the discourse were drawn up, which, in essence, are those that abide today.⁴⁶ Essentially, it is a divide between those who argue that the Scandinavian place-names and culture of the northern Danelaw can only have been created by large numbers of colonists, and those who say that a small number of high-status migrants might have wielded cultural influence out of all proportion to their actual numbers. In the late 1970s, however, both sides of the debate on secondary migrations came under attack from a new and perhaps unexpected source, when Nicholas Brooks suggested that Sawyer had greatly overstated his case for the smallness of Viking armies and that Stenton had been right to think that at least the army of 865 “should be numbered in thousands rather than hundreds”.⁴⁷ This, of course, meant that the secondary migration was no longer necessary to explain the toponymists' evidence of massive change, although this did not stop certain scholars continuing to argue for the reality of the secondary migration.⁴⁸ During the 1980s, however, the heat went out of the Viking settlements argument, and most interpretations settled down into an orthodoxy in which the number of settlers was put at a rather higher figure than any suggested by Sawyer, but much lower than the maximalists had alleged.⁴⁹

Archaeology and the 1970s

Characteristic of both sides of the debate opened by Sawyer was a reliance upon

⁴⁵ For the second edition, Sawyer rewrote the chapter on settlements to take account of developments since 1962, and in particular to refute specifically some of the arguments of the place-name experts: *The Age of the Vikings* (2nd edn.), 167-71. See also G. Fellows Jensen, “The Vikings in England: a review” for an account of the debate, and Sawyer's papers on settlement: “Anglo-Saxon settlement: the documentary evidence”, in T. Rowley (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape* (BAR bs 6: Oxford, 1974), 108-119, “Early medieval English settlement”, in P.H. Sawyer (ed.) *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change* (Edward Arnold: London, 1976), 1-8, “Some sources for the history of Viking Northumbria”, in Hall (ed.) *Viking Age York and the North*, 3-7.

⁴⁶ The tenor of the debate is captured in *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 2 (1969), which was entirely given over to debate between Sawyer and his critics.

⁴⁷ Brooks, “England in the ninth century: the crucible of defeat”, Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 243, n. 1.

⁴⁸ Logan, *op. cit.*, Loyn, *Vikings in Britain*.

⁴⁹ Hadley, “And they proceeded”, 70-1.

various types of written evidence, be they onomastic or directly historical. Archaeology, when mentioned at all, tended to be used as negative evidence; the absence of obviously Scandinavian graves for instance was cited in favour of a minimalist interpretation of the settlement.⁵⁰ David Wilson's 1968 assessment of the archaeological evidence for the Danish settlements and raids was an important attempt to redress the balance of debate and introduce archaeological evidence more fully into it. He showed the essential poverty of the excavated record as it then existed, but held out high hopes for the future, that with increased research, archaeological evidence would produce significant resources of new evidence.⁵¹ One type of archaeological evidence, however; the sculpture, already had a long tradition of scholarship and of usage in the question of the settlements.

Interest in the art of the Viking age had never really diminished since the days of Collingwood, with a number of publications in the 1950s, the most important of which undoubtedly being Shetelig (ed.) *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oslo, 1954). However, in the late 1960s and 1970s, as a result of the activities of such scholars as Rosemary Cramp, Jim Lang and Richard Bailey there was a renaissance in research into the characteristic Viking Age sculpture of the North, which was to bear significant fruit in the British Academy's *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, published from 1984 onwards. The general mood of the debate on the sculpture leaned towards a maximalist settlement, with direct correlations being made between the undeniably considerable body of allegedly "Scandinavian-style" sculpture in Yorkshire and the numbers of possible patrons for such work.⁵² Sculpture has thus been harnessed to the cause of maximising the numbers of settlers in Britain.

Although Viking carved stonework was being employed for new purposes from the late 1960s onwards it was not at that time by any means 'new' evidence. On the other hand, in this period urban renewal in British cities prompted many rescue excavations which

⁵⁰ Sawyer, "density", 7.

⁵¹ D.M. Wilson, "Archaeological evidence for the Viking settlements", 302. The substance of this paper is incorporated into a chapter of Wilson's influential book *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (Methuen: London, 1976), (pp. 393-403).

⁵² Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*.

brought to light new types of evidence for the effects of the Danes, that transformed thought about the period, setting entirely new research agendas and priorities. Prime amongst these were, of course, the various excavations at York, which culminated in the famous 'Viking dig' of 1976-1981 and the subsequent construction of the Jorvik Viking museum which helped to arouse popular interest in the Vikings to unprecedented heights. The excavations at York were not alone, with excavations on a large scale in Lincoln, and to a rather more limited extent in others of the Five Boroughs; nevertheless it is only in Yorkshire that the Vikings have been successfully incorporated into myths of local identity. The urban excavations demonstrated clearly the size and prosperity of the Viking Age centres, prime amongst which was, of course, York. Recognition of this fact prompted a new direction to study of the settlement, namely attempting to establish the extent to which the dramatic growth in the size and sophistication of urban settlement was dependent upon Scandinavian settlement, or if it was a process that was occurring anyway, perhaps as a consequence of the disruption caused by the Viking raids.⁵³

This period marks a significant transition in the types of disciplinary methodology brought to bear on the Viking period. Previous to the 1970s the subject had been entirely the preserve of specialists in written evidence, albeit with a few notable exceptions. Increasingly in the 1970s and 1980s however, archaeologists concerned themselves with the Viking settlement, both in excavations and publications. Coincidentally this was also the period in which the New Archaeological winds of change were starting to blow through early medieval archaeology. The archaeologists who were drawn into the field in the wake of the York excavations brought with them ideas drawn from anthropological models about migration that brought a new dimension to the subject. Nevertheless, archaeological models have never had quite the impact upon study of the Scandinavian settlement in Yorkshire that they have had upon that of the 'English' settlement, nor has there been such a clear-cut discourse between practitioners of the rival methodologies of archaeology and history. Inasmuch as there has emerged conflict along disciplinary lines it has been between language specialists, who tend to favour interpretations incorporating populations movement on a

⁵³ Richards, *Viking Age England*, 42 ff.

very large scale, and historians, who have been rather more sceptical.⁵⁴

An interesting counterpoint to the development of archaeological interest in the Viking settlement was provided by the work of A.P. Smyth, who attempted to breathe new life into the study of the narrative sources for the Viking Age in Britain, and in particular those for the Scandinavian political and commercial axis of York and Dublin. Smyth tried to identify various of the leaders of the Viking armies known from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and other English sources with those that appear in Irish annals, in an attempt to show a dynastic element to the struggles for control of York and Dublin in the first half of the tenth century. Although Smyth's approach, and particularly his usage of late Scandinavian sources, has attracted much criticism, at the very least this is proof that the capacities of the written sources had not been wholly exhausted or rejected by Sawyer's critique, and in possibly providing a Scandinavian ruling dynasty for Yorkshire, Smyth may have also re-constructed an important part of the factors governing the development and survival of an explicitly Scandinavian and immigrant identity in the area.⁵⁵

The 1980s

The interest engendered by the York excavations bore fruit in the early 1980s with a number of major exhibitions (with their attendant publications), a popular television series and, in 1984, the opening of the Jorvik Viking Centre. As the 1980s progressed, the impetus in Viking studies was increasingly that of archaeology. Publication of the York and Wharram material, and completion of the sculpture corpus presented scholars with an enormous body of material culture. Simultaneously there was paradigmatic change in the way in which that material culture was used and the questions that were asked of it. The great expansion of Viking Age archaeology had coincided with the arrival of New

⁵⁴ E. James, "The Northern World in the Dark Ages, 400-900", in G Holmes (ed.) *The Oxford History of Medieval Europe*, (OUP: Oxford, 1988), 58-108, 106.

⁵⁵ A.P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin* (2 vols.) (Dublin, 1975, New Jersey, 1978), *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles, 850-880* (OUP: Oxford, 1977). Compare the treatment of the evidence for the dynasty of Ragnarr Loðbrok in the British Isles in R. McTurk, "Ragnarr Loðbrok in the Irish Annals", in B. Almqvist and D. Greene (eds.), *Proceedings of the seventh Viking Congress* (1976), 93-123, but see also Patrick Wormald's defence of Smyth in "Viking studies: whence and whither?", 141-4.

Archaeology into the early medieval end of the discipline, and those attracted to the period brought with them a new theoretical and methodological paraphernalia, which transformed the character of the study of the period. A newly self-confident archaeology was no longer content to be used as a source of illustrations for written history but sought to set its own research priorities.⁵⁶

The pioneer processualists were of course firmly anti-migrationist and concerned with minimising the importance of population movement. In Peter Sawyer's work, with its emphasis on the continuity of the landscape and with a comparatively small settlement, they found ideas very much to their taste, and it is without doubt that the advent of archaeological interpretations has given a significant fillip to the ailing minimalist cause.⁵⁷

Recent Approaches to the Viking Settlement

In recent years, debate has tended to follow the lines laid down in the 1970s and 1980s, although with a continuing diversification in the range of sources deemed to be of relevance. The numbers debate still rumbles on, with no immediate prospect of resolution. The minimalist interpretation has been given new impetus with the advent into the field of various archaeologists or historians with archaeological experience, who have brought experience from the question of the Anglo-Saxon settlements to bear upon the question. Nick Higham, for instance, has put forward a minimalist interpretation of the Danish settlement in Yorkshire, employing similar thinking to that which he has used with reference to the fifth and sixth centuries.⁵⁸ More significantly, Julian Richards has examined the evidence for settlement in his work on the archaeology, concluding that “there is little evidence for a mass peasant migration of new settlers, clearing new land.”⁵⁹ On the other hand, the impact of such views outside the specifically archaeological literature has been

⁵⁶ R. Hodges, Review of P.H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, in *Med Arch* 28 (1984), 270-272.

⁵⁷ To take the most obvious example, Richards, *Viking Age England* clearly owes a heavy debt to Sawyer in all of its treatment of the non-archaeological evidence.

⁵⁸ Higham, *Northumbria*, 194-197.

⁵⁹ Richards, *op. cit.*, 42.

limited. Donald Logan in 1991 believed that there had been “thousands upon thousands” of settlers arriving to work the land of the Danelaw over the course of 150 years after 865, whilst Henry Loyn continued to see the settlement in maximalist terms in 1994.⁶⁰ There remains a true spectrum of views on the question; practically all commentators consider it to be important, but there is no simple way of determining an answer, nor does it seem likely that one will emerge. Some writers have been prepared to concede that methodological difficulties render it exceedingly hard to reckon the numbers of settlers with any degree of accuracy; all, however, are agreed that the political and cultural impact of the settlements was considerable, and attention has increasingly turned to the more fruitful question of attempting to discern the significance of the Viking settlement in the development of particular features of English society.⁶¹

It is only very recently indeed that the traditional numbers debate has been enlivened by the new thinking on the nature of early medieval ethnicity. In this respect the Viking settlement discourse is rather behind that on the ‘Anglo-Saxon settlements’, which has been seeing the impact of the new vision of ethnicity as constructed, subjective and negotiable, for some time.⁶² However, it is now starting to be argued that the separateness of Danes and English, and the coherence of these alleged ethnic groupings have both been overstated.⁶³ Instead it is suggested that there was no clear divide between ‘Scandinavians’ and ‘English’, and, conversely, that there is no reason to assume that the conquering élite would have made any sort of common cause with any peasants who may have followed them.⁶⁴ Material and linguistic culture, according to these ideas, should not be read as a passive reflection of the numbers of ‘Danes’ and ‘English’, but as tools to be used actively in the integration of settlers and the indigenous inhabitants and the construction of new

⁶⁰ Logan, *The Vikings in History*, 170, Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain*, 77-101.

⁶¹ N.S. Price, “Western Europe”, in J. Graham-Campbell (ed.) *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (Andromeda: Oxford, 1994), 122-147, 141, Richards, *op. cit.*, 37.

⁶² Hadley, ““And they proceeded to plough and to support themselves””, 84.

⁶³ Reynolds, “What do we mean by “Anglo-Saxon”?”, 411, Hadley, *op. cit.*, 86.

⁶⁴ Hadley, *op. cit.*, 84, 87.

identities.⁶⁵

Although this is a new avenue of exploration, some important initial work has been done by John Hines in a 1991 article primarily concerned with language contacts. He puts forward the proposition that there were two different phases in which Old Norse and Old English had contact in the Danelaw. The first, initiated by the conquest, saw Old Norse dominant, and with all the characteristics of a target language, which the subjugated English would attempt to learn for their own social advantage: the second saw a reverse process of deliberate acclimatization towards an English norm by “Scandinavians”, evidenced not only in language but by usage of particular types of material cultural norms, such as the production of coinage, the burial of the dead in community churchyards or the acceptance of Christianity. Such measures were undertaken in order perhaps to appease the local community and as part of the adaptation to the cultural conditions of settled life.⁶⁶

The implications of the new thinking are considerable. Without rejecting population movement as a social and cultural dynamic, it has focused attention away from the irresolvable problem of numbers and onto issues of identity which may be explored with reference both to a substantial body of linguistic evidence and a steadily expanding archaeological record. Such exploration has not yet progressed far, but it seems likely that further developments in the study of the Scandinavian settlement will be along these lines.

⁶⁵ *op. cit.*, 95-6.

⁶⁶ J. Hines, “Scandinavian English: A Creole in context”, in P. Sture Ureland and G. Broderick (eds.) *Language Contact in the British Isles. Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on Language Contact in Europe, Douglas, Isle of Man, 1988* (Max Niemeyer Verlag: Tübingen, 1991), 403-427, 416-418.

4.1 Written History

Introduction

It is one of the many ironies of Viking studies that although it is written evidence that has ensured the fame of Viking activity, that very activity must be blamed for the near-extinction of the literary tradition in the areas in which it took place. The Anglo-Scandinavian period saw the disruption of most of the monastic *scriptoria* in Yorkshire, and the destruction of their great libraries, impoverishing understanding not only of the period itself but of all of post-Bedan Northumbrian history. There is consequently a hiatus in surviving Northumbrian manuscripts between the mid-ninth and late-tenth centuries that is almost unbroken.⁶⁷ Contemporary written evidence for the Vikings in Yorkshire comes almost entirely from the West Saxon kingdom, the prime source being, of course, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. To this may be added, however, a not-inconsiderable body of material preserved by the monastic community of the cathedral church of St. Peter at York, and by that of St. Cuthbert, which was incorporated into a number of later histories by members of those communities.⁶⁸

Meagre as they are, these English sources are the only reliable means of reconstructing the narrative framework of the Scandinavian episode in the history of Yorkshire. It is a fact much lamented that not only did the Vikings do immense damage to native literary traditions, they produced no historian of their own.⁶⁹ The nearest approach are the romanticized and fictionalized late medieval sagas. Some of these, in particular *Egil's Saga*, purport to hold quite detailed information on the chronology of Viking Yorkshire, but, despite the sustained advocacy of Alfred P. Smyth, they are generally regarded as unusable confabulations.⁷⁰ It is the English sources, and above all the *Chronicle*, that have formed

⁶⁷ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 243, n. 6.

⁶⁸ Sawyer, "Some sources for the history of Viking Northumbria", 3.

⁶⁹ P. Wormald, "The Ninth Century", in J. Campbell (ed.) *The Anglo-Saxons*, 132-157, 134.

⁷⁰ A.P. Smyth has been the main champion of the legitimacy and usefulness of the saga sources for the Scandinavian north of England, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles*,

the starting-point for all enquiry into the Danish settlement, and it is their priorities and their interests that have moulded the development of the discourse throughout its history.

The *Chronicle*, however, records little more than the fact of Danish settlement in Northumbria. Historians interested in the character, extent and effects of that settlement have broadened their enquiry far beyond the narrative sources to include a wide variety of evidence, encompassing linguistics, onomastics and archaeology (see 4.2 and 4.3 below). The main thrust of the written historical enquiry, however, has been to establish, on the strength of the documentary evidence, the character of the society, law and institutions of the Scandinavian-settled area, and to assess the extent to which they were the products of settlement. In practice this has meant trying to maximise the usefulness of a small but varied collection of documents of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and later.⁷¹ These include the 13 surviving pre-Norman Conquest Northumbrian charters and some legal and ecclesiastical material, but easily the most important source for the study of the society of Anglo-Scandinavian Yorkshire, as it is for the rest of England in the period, is *Domesday Book* (*DB*). The success or failure of all study of the documentary evidence for the settlement ultimately is dependant upon the extent to which it is able to overcome the problems and limitations which usage of *DB* presents.

The traditional usage of *DB*, exemplified by Stenton, is absolutely straightforward. The landholding and social structures of the Danelaw and of 'English' England, as described by *DB*, are compared. Where they differ, the Danelaw form is ascribed to the settlement. Using this method, Stenton examined *DB*, and found a number of forms, such as the administrative units known as wapentakes, the general apparent freedom of a large class of peasants and distinctive Scandinavian forms of law as being indicative of the presence of Scandinavian settlers. Modern commentators, however, have pointed out a number of problems with this. Firstly, it treats the Danelaw as a strange divergence from an ideal norm of social and political development embodied by Wessex. Secondly, and perhaps more fundamentally, it treats the Danish settlement as the only significant agency of change which

850-880, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*. For the most part his case has fallen on deaf ears. However, see Wormald, "Viking studies", 141-144, and John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*, 70-1, sympathetic appraisals of Smyth's case and its reception.

⁷¹ Sawyer, "Some sources for the history of Viking Northumbria", 3.

the two areas did not hold in common, ignoring both pre-existing differences between them, and the hugely varying political and economic fortunes of the two in the first half of the tenth century, and their respective conditions as conquered and conqueror in the second half of that century. Thirdly, it means that we are left trying to extrapolate events not from any knowledge of them themselves, but from their results, and without even having the benefit of knowing the starting position.

Recognition of these problems has prompted a move away from the mechanistic equation of Danelaw difference with Scandinavian settlement. Nevertheless, in many areas it remains, and it is this which is considered below with regard to the law, landholding and the Church respectively.

In what follows, the two different usages of written evidence about the Scandinavian settlement of Yorkshire are considered; the construction of a narrative framework for the conquest, settlement and 'reconquest' of the Danelaw, and the attempt to determine how the Danelaw differed from 'English' England. The first of these, based largely on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, attempted to construct a political history of the north throughout the period. The second, developed, to some extent, due to recognition of the inadequacy of the first, had clear intentions; to determine the character of Danelaw society, and through comparison with 'English' England, to judge the effects of Scandinavian settlement. The main source for this is, of course, Domesday Book. This, in turn, has been subjected to intense methodological questioning by those who believe that it is unnecessary to see the nature of the Danelaw society as being specifically Scandinavian in origin.

Narrative History

It is an unfortunate, but entirely comprehensible fact that Yorkshire figures comparatively little in the records of the Danish raids in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It was a West Saxon document with West Saxon priorities and those events not directly germane to the defence and survival of the West Saxon kingdom received short shrift in its pages.⁷²

⁷² Sawyer, *Age of the Vikings* (1st edn.), 24-5.

From the capture of Northumbria in 866-7 and the installation of the English puppet king Egbert, events in the area become even more impenetrable. There seems to have been a successful revolt against Egbert in 872, although whether this represents as much an attempt to shrug off Danish suzerainty as a continuation of the venerable Northumbrian tradition of civil war is debatable. What is more important is the Danish response. The great army marched into Northumbria, putting down the revolt, in 873, returning two years later, when, in the famous words of the Chronicle “Halfdan shared out the lands of Northumbria, and they [the Danish army] were engaged in ploughing and in making a living for themselves”. Roger of Wendover has a slight variation on this statement; “Healfdene, king of the Danes, occupied Northumbria, and divided it among himself and his thegns, and had it cultivated by his army”, which emphasises the fact that the sharing-out of land was no general carve-up, but a carefully organised parcelling out by the Viking leaders for their own benefit.⁷³ Simeon of Durham adds that Egbert II became king of the Northumbrians beyond the Tyne, showing that this was in fact a partition between Danes and English rather than a straightforward conquest of the whole of Northumbria. However there is no further information available about how the settlement took place, the numbers of Danes involved, or the fate of the supplanted English upper class. Indeed it is only on the basis of place names and through later references that it becomes clear that York and Yorkshire were the centres of settlement.

Two later influxes of Scandinavian settlers to Yorkshire are evident in the written sources.⁷⁴ In 896 the Chronicle records the dispersal of the Great Army, with some of its members settling down in Northumbria (with even fewer indications of how this took place and what it meant than in 876). Some twenty years later Rægnald seems to have penetrated Northumbria from the west together with his Norwegian Irish followers from Dublin; certainly in 923 one version of the Chronicle mentions Norwegians along with English and Danes as inhabitants of Northumbria.

This is the full extent of information on Scandinavian settlement furnished by narrative written histories. Putting meat on these bare bones is by no means an easy task. The main

⁷³ Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, 104-5.

⁷⁴ *op. cit.*, 102.

question normally posed is of whether the settlements described by the *Chronicle* were the only, or even the most important, movements of Scandinavians into Yorkshire. Stenton's military interpretation was dependant upon the assumption that the written sources described the whole extent of the Scandinavian land-taking.⁷⁵ The many adherents of the "two-stage" orthodoxy, on the other hand, have argued that the written sources are solely concerned with military threats to Wessex, and that they hence had no reason to record the migration even of large numbers of peasant settlers into the Danelaw.⁷⁶ A parallel example is with the Hiberno-Norse settlers of the north west of England (and perhaps of Yorkshire too), who posed no threat to the West Saxon kingdom and hence were entirely ignored in English sources; they are known only from archaeological and toponymic traces and from references in Irish annals. With the written sources clearly capable of such blindness, there is no need to attach any significance to the military settlements described by the *Chronicle* beyond the fact that they provided the context and protection in which further settlement could take place, perhaps over a very considerable period.⁷⁷

Peter Sawyer, despite having launched the assault on the trustworthiness of the written sources in 1958, later expressed surprise that a migration on a truly large scale did not leave *any* trace in later traditions and asserted that the colonisation of England was not the work of "a silent stream of peasants" but of the 'armies' themselves.⁷⁸ There is, it seems, no easy answer; whilst the *Chronicle* does not exactly command respect on the question of the settlers, there must be grounds for hesitation before replacing a theory for which there is some evidence with one for which there is none at all.⁷⁹

This impasse does not, however, exhaust the possibilities of the written evidence for understanding the effect of the settlers upon Yorkshire. One scholar who has attempted to

⁷⁵ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 502-525.

⁷⁶ Stated most emphatically in Logan, *Vikings in History*, 166.

⁷⁷ Logan, *op. cit.*, 166.

⁷⁸ Sawyer, "density", 8, *Age of the Vikings* (2nd edn.), 168-9. In *Kings and Vikings* in 1982 he mentioned the presence of later groups of Scandinavian colonists, but these were only those mentioned by the English sources (p. 102).

⁷⁹ Wormald, "Viking studies", 135.

use it is A.P. Smyth, in his books published in the late 1970s, which breathed new life into the increasingly moribund debate on the historical sources, albeit at the cost of considerable criticism.⁸⁰ He emphasized the axis between the great Viking trading centres at York and Dublin and suggested that the kings of Dublin who made such considerable efforts to take Northumbria, and, at its centre, York, in the tenth century were direct descendants of Ivarr *inn beinlausi*, the Danelaw's founder of 866-7. The tussle with the West Saxon royal family for Northumbria thus took on a dynastic quality. Smyth's thesis has been much criticised, but if it is correct, then it places the Hiberno-Norse conquest of the tenth century in a very particular ideological context, which might perhaps have perpetuated the difference between Northumbrians and Southumbrians and helped to cement the disparate groupings of Northumbria into a more unified whole.

Administration and the Law

To those brought up on Stubbs, it was natural to look to the law and institutions of government as evidence for the effects of Scandinavian settlement. In DB there are clear differences in the terminology of government and the law between the Danelaw and 'English' England.

The division of England into three areas; Mercian, West Saxon and Danelaw, according to the dominant legal forms followed imposes a unity on a huge area (the Danelaw) which may have had no meaning in military, political, administrative or other terms;⁸¹ it does however demonstrate the longevity of Scandinavian influence upon eastern England. The administrative and political units of Scandinavian England are however visible at a slightly lower level. Primarily this is seen in the creation of huge shires, far larger than anything known in the south. Yorkshire and Lincolnshire are prime examples of this; their size is normally ascribed to the political and, above all, military circumstances of their creation and the need for defence.⁸² Yorkshire was divided into three thrithings, or ridings,

⁸⁰ Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, *idem.*, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles*, On Smyth's critics, see Wormald, *op. cit.*, 141 and n. 85.

⁸¹ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 507.

⁸² Stenton, *op. cit.*, Loyn, *Vikings in Britain*, 89.

clearly a Danish creation, and with some significance as units of local government, to judge by Domesday Book.⁸³ Below this the North and West Ridings were divided into wapentakes (wæpentac/vapnatak) and the East Riding into hundreds (in common with the practice of southern England). These units seem to have served the same purpose (indeed, in one case in Domesday Book, an East Riding hundred is described as a wapentake), though records which might show differences between the two do not survive.⁸⁴

Although in general the written evidence for Yorkshire is impoverished even by comparison with the rest of the Danelaw, the one exception to this is in the field of law. Northumbrian custom is preserved in three pre-Norman documents: a list of wergilds pertaining within the kingdom of York, a penitentiary for any breaking the peace of the great Northumbrian churches and the so-called “Northumbrian priests’ law”.⁸⁵ These do not, by any means, give a full assessment of the range of customs and traditions prevailing in the area, though they do throw up some points of interest, and they are complemented by observations made by eleventh-century and later compilers about the customs that were observed amongst the Danes.⁸⁶ There are a number of technical differences between the basically-similar and compatible Danish and English codes according to Stenton. Some of these are purely linguistic – there is a heavy penetration by Scandinavian legal terminology – but others have been claimed to show differences from ‘English’ law alleged to derive directly from the Scandinavian settlement. Amongst these can be noted the creation of a wergild for a class of ‘holds’ in between earls and thegns (taken to be army commanders), and the fact that the wergilds payable in the Danelaw varied with the dead man’s status, rather than with that of his lord as in ‘English’ England, which has been taken to demonstrate “the sustained social eminence of the free Scandinavian warrior farmer”.⁸⁷

Society and Territorial Organisation

⁸³ Stenton, *op. cit.*, 504, n.1.

⁸⁴ *op. cit.*, 505.

⁸⁵ *op. cit.*, 508, Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents I*, nos. 52 and 53.

⁸⁶ *op. cit.*, 507.

⁸⁷ Loyn, *op. cit.*, 92.

At the core of Stenton's argument for the extent and effect of Scandinavian settlement was the proposition that an influx of considerable numbers of settlers transformed the social structure and the landholding mechanisms of the Danelaw, and that the undoubted peculiarities of the Domesday estate geography of the area (when compared with the south and west) are a direct consequence of this.⁸⁸ The main evidence is provided by Domesday Book, backed up with charters. Scholars normally point to two main characteristics of the Yorkshire Domesday evidence; the large estates recorded, and the numbers of sokemen.⁸⁹

The Domesday Book picture of landholding in Yorkshire, as in the whole of the northern Danelaw, is rather complex, and offers a striking contrast with that of the south and west. In 'English' England manorial and village units commonly coincided and the rights of the lord tended to be strongly concentrated and territorialised. In the northern Danelaw, by contrast, a single village might contain many manorial holdings, whilst rights were less territorialised and more complex, with frequent overlappings.⁹⁰ Particular attention has been devoted to the characteristic landholding unit of the area, the large estate (or 'soke'); these consisted of a central manor (the demesne), which normally had a place-name of completely English form, accompanied by outlying lands (called berewicks or sokeland), which frequently formed their names with a compound of a 'Scandinavian' personal name and the element -bý.⁹¹

Stenton saw these sokes as a creation of the free association of a number of sokemen, which had increasingly become territorialised in the late pre-Norman Conquest period; they were for him thus a creation of the ninth century settlement, albeit modified by pressures affecting the whole of England in the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁹² Glanville R.J. Jones, however reversed Sawyer's equation to suggest that the sokes were evidence not of new

⁸⁸ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 513-9.

⁸⁹ Hadley, "Multiple estates", 3.

⁹⁰ Loyn, *Vikings in Britain*, 95.

⁹¹ Hadley, "Multiple estates", 3.

⁹² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 518-9.

types of social organisation created by the Scandinavian settlement, but precisely of the survival of more ancient types of territorial organisation. On the basis of analogy with similar institutions in Kent (where they are called 'lathes'), Northumbria ('shires'), Wales and Scotland, Jones and others claimed that the typical unit of agricultural exploitation throughout England in the pre-Viking (and perhaps even pre-Saxon) period had been these 'multiple estates'.⁹³ The settling Danes, according to Jones, inherited this estate structure, with only comparatively minor changes. The nobility possessed themselves of the estate centres, seldom changing their English names, but granted to their followers some degree of rights over the outlying hamlets, thus prompting the frequent appearance of the Scandinavian place-name element -by compounded with a personal name.⁹⁴

There has been some criticism of the "multiple estates" model for its reliance upon late evidence, and the tendency to conflate evidence from many different functions of society in pursuit of these units, but it has been massively influential.⁹⁵ It is, of course, completely compatible with interpretations postulating a minimal (and military) settlement, and provides a partial explanation for the numbers of Scandinavianized place-names (particularly those in -by) without recourse to a mass migration. Peter Sawyer's more recent work is heavily influenced by the model; he, however, suggests that the successive defeats of the Scandinavian rulers of the Danelaw greatly weakened the authority of the aristocracy, and allowed smaller landowners to escape from some of their obligations. The change in names of many settlements represents not new colonization or change in ownership, but a change in the status of these settlements, perhaps representing a fuller ownership, or even the acquisition of rights to sell land or alienate it from estates.⁹⁶

⁹³ G.R.J. Jones, "Early territorial organization in northern England and its bearing on the Scandinavian settlement", in P. Sawyer (ed.) *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change* (London, 1976), 15-40, G.W.S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the 11th to the 14th Century* (Edinburgh, 1973), chapter one.

⁹⁴ Jones, "Early territorial organization", 83.

⁹⁵ Hadley, "Multiple estates", 3, 8.

⁹⁶ Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, 106-7.

Very recently, Dawn Hadley has questioned the validity of the automatic equation of the northern Danelaw sokes with ancient multiple estates. She shows that although many sokes may, indeed, on the strength of the evidence, be dated to the pre-Viking past, others were clearly creations of the tenth century; in other words, estates were not only fragmenting to form smaller units but also amalgamating to create larger ones.⁹⁷ This was clearly, in part, a consequence of the new flexibility which had also seen the development of a market in land, but Hadley suggests that it may also have had a political context, in the donation of large estates by the West Saxon kings to their followers in the wake of their conquest, in order to ensure the area's loyalty.⁹⁸

The estates have lain at the centre of a controversy, still-ongoing, about the exploitation of land in pre-Viking and Viking -period England, and the so-called 'multiple estate' model. This model, largely the creation of Glanville Jones, suggested that all of pre-Viking England was divided into large estates (frequently the possession of corporate bodies such as monasteries), but that in the later pre-Norman period these fragmented and large numbers of private landholders appeared, giving the patchwork of small manors characteristic of much of England in Domesday Book.⁹⁹ Opinion was divided as to the role of the Viking settlers in this development, as it was suggested that the process would have happened anyway, as the Anglo-Saxon kings were making permanent grants of land to their followers in reward for their loyalty. Nevertheless the privatization of land and the development of a market in land accompanied the Viking settlement and it seems likely that the two processes were inter-related.¹⁰⁰ In the northern Danelaw, however, including Yorkshire, the characteristic landholding structure was of "large estates (or sokes) consisting of a central manor with outlying berewicks and sokeland" (types of land both owing allegiance to the manor but owned respectively by the lord of the manor and those living on them).¹⁰¹ Jones, arguing for a minimalist Scandinavian settlement, suggested that

⁹⁷ Hadley, "multiple estates", 5-8.

⁹⁸ Hadley, *op. cit.*, 7.

⁹⁹ Glanville Jones etc.

¹⁰⁰ See Richards, *Viking Age England*, 30 ff.

¹⁰¹ Stenton, *Types of Manorial Structure in the Northern Danelaw*, (Oxford 1910), 4 ff.

this showed that the large estates had survived the settlements largely unmutated, and that they had been taken over by the new, Scandinavian, elite as going concerns with little disruption. Indeed he saw the large Domesday sokes as being survivals even of the pre-Anglo-Saxon past. Essentially his argument was for long-term continuity of estate structures and organization, with changes only in the personnel of the elites benefiting from the land. He thus replaced Stenton's model which saw in the large sokes traces of military settlement.¹⁰² The multiple estate model has been much criticised, not least because of Jones's reliance upon late sources, but it has been highly influential. Nevertheless recently Dawn Hadley has put forward a less static model of the development of estates in Yorkshire, that points out that although doubtless some of the great Domesday sokes are of considerable antiquity, it should not be assumed that they all were of the same age and had formed in the same way. There is evidence that some sokes came into existence in the tenth century (at least partly as a result of the West Saxon conquest), and reason to think that many of the Domesday Book sokes had come into existence not, in the first place, as integrated economic and territorial units, but as associations of smaller 'manorial' units of exploitation. She sees enormous complexity in the overlapping rights of property and exploitative units of the Danelaw and suggests that this is the consequence of the disruption of the royal and ecclesiastical lordship which, in Wessex, had given rise to "a highly uniform estate and social structure".¹⁰³

Stenton's interpretation of the Danish settlement saw the Domesday sokemen as descendants of the settlers of the late ninth century. On the grounds of their distribution (overwhelmingly concentrated in the Danelaw, especially in the north) he based his ideas of the relative density of the Scandinavian settlement, seeing the northern Danelaw as being the heaviest colonized.¹⁰⁴ In Yorkshire, which on place-name evidence seemed to show heavy Scandinavian influence, however, Domesday Book showed very small numbers of sokemen; Stenton attributed the anomaly to the devastation of Yorkshire by William the Conqueror, but others have been less convinced, pointing to parts of Yorkshire rich in Scandinavian place-names and largely undamaged by the Normans which nevertheless have few

¹⁰² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 525.

¹⁰³ Hadley, "Multiple estates", 12.

¹⁰⁴ Stenton, *op. cit.*, 516.

sokemen.¹⁰⁵ The only reason to link Danes and sokemen is on this rather weakened basis of their coincidence, and even that indicates only that the emergence of the status and name was, in some way, a result of disruption and conquest by Scandinavians. It is at least as likely, as Sawyer says, that “the sokemen were English peasants whose social, legal and economic status had been altered as a result of the Danish conquests”.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, even if the equation of sokeman and Scandinavian cannot be sustained, various historians have, like Stenton, detected a greater independence on the part of the Danelaw peasant than his English brethren, and an altogether less onerous character to the dues and rights owed to the manorial lord.¹⁰⁷ The explanation frequently put forward for this again concentrates on the discontinuity and disruption of lordship over the area due to the raids and conquest.¹⁰⁸ Indeed Loyn sees this as of far more significance than the direct and obvious influx of allegedly traditionally independent Scandinavian warrior farmers.¹⁰⁹

The Church

“It is”, a recent commentator has said, “undoubtedly for violence against the Church that the Vikings have been most seriously vilified”; it was this that attracted the horrified attention of Alcuin in one of the most oft-quoted literary references to the early Viking raids, and it has indubitably been the impression that study of the written sources has left on many modern historians.¹¹⁰ Many have joined Stenton in seeing the church in the north and east as very seriously damaged by Scandinavian activity and its pre-Viking organization as utterly destroyed and never to be restored.¹¹¹ Nevertheless the distinction was drawn

¹⁰⁵ Sawyer, *Age of the Vikings* (1st edn.), 163, Jones, “Early territorial organization in northern England”, 71.

¹⁰⁶ Sawyer, *op. cit.*, 164.

¹⁰⁷ Loyn, *Vikings in Britain*, 95.

¹⁰⁸ *op. cit.*, 97.

¹⁰⁹ *op. cit.*, 96.

¹¹⁰ D.M. Hadley, “Conquest, colonization and the church: Ecclesiastical organization in the Danelaw”, in *Historical Research* 69, 109-128, 109. Alcuin's letters on the sack of Lindisfarne: Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents I*, nos. 193 and 194.

¹¹¹ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 433-5.

between Viking activity against the wealthy, and undefended, monasteries of eastern England during the raids of the ninth century, and Danish attitudes to Christianity upon settling in England: Stenton, for instance, found no evidence that the Danish settlers were “fiercely antagonistic” to Christianity. Naturally a great deal of attention has been devoted to the process of conversion of the Danes to Christianity and, conversely, to the extent of obdurate paganism, for in the religious divide commentators have discerned the one major institutional distinction between English and Scandinavians in the Danelaw.¹¹²

The main evidence of the Danelaw church again lies in Domesday Book; supporting data is sparse, and hence once again historians have been forced to draw conclusions about developments throughout the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries on the basis of, at one end of the period, knowledge of the Northumbrian church which becomes increasingly impoverished and inadequate as it proceeds into the early ninth century, and, at the other end, a snapshot picture taken firmly in the last quarter of the eleventh century. The picture which emerges from Domesday Book is of a clear contrast between the position of the Church in the Danelaw and in English England: both monastic houses and secular minsters were far fewer in the north and east, and the Church held far less land (less than one tenth, as opposed to a fifth to a third in ‘English’ England).¹¹³ The network of rural minsters said to be present in the south and west of England in the late Saxon period are entirely absent from the Danelaw, and even York seems to have been very much impoverished.¹¹⁴ Simultaneously the north was starved of clergy, with the sees of Lincoln, Hexham and Whithorn allowed to fall into abeyance.¹¹⁵ Most historians have explained these differences largely as the result of the effects of Scandinavian raiding and settlement.¹¹⁶

However, there is reason to suppose that the case for all disruption being laid at the doors of the Danes has at least been overstated. Dawn Hadley has pointed out the paucity

¹¹² Loyn, *op. cit.*, 91.

¹¹³ Hadley, “Conquest, colonization and the church”, 111.

¹¹⁴ Hadley, *op. cit.*, 110, Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 433.

¹¹⁵ Stenton, *op. cit.*, 434, but compare Hadley, *op. cit.*, 120.

¹¹⁶ Stenton, *op. cit.*, 433 etc.

of our knowledge of the Northumbrian church in the century preceding the Scandinavian conquest.¹¹⁷ The few indications that there are suggest a Church in decline, whose lands were subject to the predations of kings.¹¹⁸ Moreover, whatever the merits of the “minster model” of the development of ecclesiastical and pastoral organization for the south (and these have been disputed), there is no reason to assume that it applied to pre-Viking Yorkshire. Hadley explains the absence of monastic communities and the relatively plenty of secular houses by suggesting that the decline of monasteries in the pre-Viking period probably ensured that, on the conversion of the Scandinavians, it was secular, not monastic, communities that they chose to patronize. There is, indeed, clear evidence that several such communities survived the upheavals of the ninth and tenth centuries relatively intact.¹¹⁹

There were, Hadley argues, many factors contributing to the peculiar ecclesiastical organization of the Danelaw in Domesday Book, of which the Scandinavian settlement and land seizure was but one, albeit an important one.¹²⁰ The indirect effects of the conquest, in disrupting the continuity of lordship and hierarchical structures, and allowing Church tenants to usurp possession of the land they farmed, must have been significant yet it is very hard to evaluate.¹²¹ Furthermore the complex manorial and social structure of the Danelaw (see 4.1 above) is likely to have encouraged the foundation of small local churches “as symbols of both lordship and community solidarity.” To this should also be added the effects of West Saxon conquest, which may, in some cases, have been more drastically injurious even than was Viking activity.¹²² In the ensuing years after the West Saxon conquest, southern English kings may have been concerned to use their power over

¹¹⁷ Hadley, *op. cit.*, 111.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* See also J. Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxons*, 135, on the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*.

¹¹⁹ Hadley, *op. cit.*, 125.

¹²⁰ *op. cit.*, 128.

¹²¹ *op. cit.*, 125.

¹²² *op. cit.*, 126.

ecclesiastical appointments and patronage to keep Northumbrian separatism in check.¹²³

¹²³ *ibid.*, D. Whitelock, "The Dealings of the Kings of England with Northumbria in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries", in P. Clemoes (ed.) *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*, (Bowes and Bowes: London, 1959) 70-88.

4.2 Linguistic Evidence

As has been said, linguistic evidence has always bulked large in interpretations of the settlement, but since the largely-successful assault on the institutional, social and economic evidence for a peasant settlement, the massive influence of Norse upon English and the numerous Norse-influenced place- and personal-names are arguably the last body of evidence regularly cited in support of a maximalist settlement.¹²⁴ Its use raises many of the same questions, and the same problems, as the British-English linguistic interface. Again, scholars are forced to try to understand the character of a process of linguistic change in the almost-complete absence of contemporary written records; they are left struggling to extrapolate the nature of the process from its results, which only become fully visible in written sources as late as the thirteenth century.¹²⁵ If anything, the contact of Scandinavian and English is rendered more problematical than that of English and British, by the difficult question of the degree to which the two languages were mutually intelligible.¹²⁶ This is crucial to understanding the process of language contact, but is practically unanswerable.¹²⁷ Related to it is another tricky question; how long did Norse continue to be spoken in England? This is of a sort familiar to historians of the English settlement, although it is

¹²⁴ Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain*, 82, John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*, 70, Hadley, “And they proceeded”, 75.

¹²⁵ D. Kastovsky, “Semantics and vocabulary”, in R.M. Hogg (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language* vol. 1, 290-408, 321.

¹²⁶ John, *op. cit.*, 70

¹²⁷ This question has generated a massive amount of comment, in the absence of any strong evidence either way: E. Björkman, *Scandinavian Loan-Words in Middle English* part i (1900), 8, Ekwall, “How long did the Scandinavian language survive in England?”, in N. Bøgholm, A Brussendorff and C.A. Bodelson (eds.), *A Grammatical Miscellany offered to Otto Jespersen on his Seventieth Birthday* (Einar Munksgaard: Copenhagen, 1930), 17-30, 19, Sawyer, “Density of the Danish settlement”, 8, G. Fellows Jensen, “Conquests and the place-names of England”, 197, B.M.H. Strang, *A History of English* (Methuen: London, 1970), 282, J. Geipel, *The Viking Legacy: The Scandinavian Influence on the English and Gaelic Languages* (David and Charles: Newton Abbot, 1971), 57, A.C. Baugh and T. Cable, *A History of the English Language* (3rd edn.) (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1978), 95, B. Hyldegaard Hansen, “The historical implications of the Scandinavian linguistic element in English”, 88, S.G. Thomason and T. Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics*, 303, Kastovsky, *op. cit.*, 328-9, M. Barnes, “Norse in the British Isles”, in Faulkes and Perkins (eds.), *Viking Revaluations*, 65-84, 71-2.

interesting to note that in this case it was the language of the migrant that expired. It is an essential part of understanding the circumstances of language change, but it too is woefully obscure.¹²⁸ It is thus hampered that the linguistic enquiry into the nature of the Scandinavian migration has proceeded.

As with the English settlements, philologists have been concerned not just with lexical, phonological, morphological and syntactic changes in the language itself but with the more specialised toponymic and anthroponymic evidence. Indeed, it has largely been place-name study, as opposed to any other sort of philology, that has been recruited to the debate on the settlements.¹²⁹ In so doing it has developed from a purely linguistic exercise into a far more complex study involving topography and geography, and become integrated into questions of landscape and settlement history not in themselves directly related to linguistic change.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, toponymy remains the jealously guarded province of philologists.¹³¹ The other branch of onomastics, anthroponymy, remains very much in the shade of place-name study, but it has been marshalled alongside the other linguistic evidence in support of a maximalist settlement, the most important recent example of this being Fellows Jensen's 1968 study of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire.¹³²

The Influence of Norse upon English

In an important burst of activity around the turn of the century, the scale and character of the Scandinavian influence upon Middle and Modern English was recognized for the first

¹²⁸ See Ekwall, "How long did the Scandinavian language survive?", R.I. Page, "How long did the Scandinavian language survive in England?", in Clemoes and Hughes (eds.), *England Before the Conquest*, 165-8, Baugh and Cable, *History of the English Language*, 95, Barnes, *op. cit.*, 67-8.

¹²⁹ Hansen, *op. cit.*, 55.

¹³⁰ C. Clark, "Onomastics", in Hogg (ed.) *Cambridge History of the English Language*, vol. 1, 452-489, 453.

¹³¹ Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, 11-12.

¹³² G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire* (Navnestudier udgivet af Institut for Navneforskning 7) (Akademisk Forlag: Copenhagen, 1968), Clark, *op. cit.*, 465-471.

time.¹³³ It was immediately clear that this influence was very great. The loan words in Middle English could be numbered by the thousand, and were not restricted to specialised technical nomenclature but embraced everyday life, with nouns such as ‘egg’, ‘window’ or ‘fellow’, adjectives such as ‘weak’ or ‘old’, and verbs as common as ‘to give’ and ‘to get’, as well as fundamental parts of speech such as the pronouns ‘they’, ‘them’ and ‘their’.¹³⁴ Later, it was suggested that Scandinavian influence might also be partly responsible for other differences between Old and Middle English, such as the abandonment of most inflexional endings, but it has always been the nature and magnitude of Scandinavian influence on the lexis that has left the deepest impression upon commentators.¹³⁵

This early speculation was brought to a far wider audience by the Anglophile Dane Otto Jespersen in a highly influential chapter of his canonical history of the English language.¹³⁶ Taking J.R. Green as his historical source, Jespersen believed in Scandinavian migration on a very large scale, but also thought that the differences between the Scandinavians and the English in race, and hence in culture and language, were small and such as to allow an easy fusion.¹³⁷ He stressed the similarities between the two languages, insisting upon their mutual comprehensibility, and claiming that they had ‘fused’.¹³⁸ However his argument was based above all upon the loan-words, which, he suggested, could throw light upon the relative numbers and relationship of the English-speaking and Old Norse-speaking communities by their frequency and the areas of life with which they were most closely connected.¹³⁹ The common-place character of the loans, he concluded, were proof of the equality of the Danes and English: “If the English loan-words in this

¹³³ A. Wall, “A contribution towards the study of the Scandinavian element in the English dialects”, in *Anglia* 20 (1898), E. Björkman, *Scandinavian Loan-Words in Middle English* (2 vols.) (Max Niemeyer: Halle, 1900-2).

¹³⁴ Björkman, *op. cit.*, Kastovsky, *op. cit.*, 320.

¹³⁵ Hansen, “Scandinavian linguistic element in English”, 61-2.

¹³⁶ O. Jespersen, *Growth and Structure of the English Language* (2nd edn.)(Teubner: Leipzig, 1912)(1st edn., 1905), 59-83, Barnes, “Norse in the British Isles”, 67.

¹³⁷ Jespersen, *op. cit.*, 77, 82.

¹³⁸ Jespersen, *op. cit.*, 82. cf. Hansen, *op. cit.*, 69, Barnes, *op. cit.*, 67.

¹³⁹ *op. cit.*, 70.

period extend to spheres where other languages do not borrow, if the Scandinavian and the English languages were woven more intimately together, the reason must be a more intimate fusion of the two nations than is seen anywhere else. They fought like brothers and afterwards settled down peacefully like brothers, side by side. The numbers of the Danish and Norwegian settlers must have been considerable, else they would have disappeared without leaving such traces in the language.”¹⁴⁰

Pan-Germanist rhetoric of this sort was a relic of the 1870s and was swiftly being overtaken in the work done by Stenton and other historians, which, although maximalist, emphasized not the alleged racial (and thus cultural) unity of the English and Danes, but rather emphasized the differences which supposedly made the two communities visible. It is interesting to note that the linguistic evidence per se (as opposed to place-names) was rarely adduced in the traditional interpretation of the settlement, despite the support it would have seemed to lend to a ‘peasant’ settlement, nor was Jespersen ever cited in the works of the principal architects of that interpretation, Eilart Ekwall and Frank Stenton. In the narrower world of philology, however, it was a different matter; Jespersen's authority was considerable, and his model of linguistic change remained dominant, with only minor changes, throughout the whole of the middle of the century and even down to the 1980s.¹⁴¹

With the emergence after the second world war of comparative and theoretical study of language contact, the need for a reassessment of Anglo-Scandinavian linguistic relations in the Danelaw in the light of the new learning became increasingly clear. In support of his case for minimalism, for instance, Peter Sawyer famously referred to Uriel Weinreich, the founder of modern study of language contact: “Even for extensive word transferring, large numbers of bilingual speakers need not be involved and the relative size of the groups is not necessarily a factor.”¹⁴² However, the majority of the new work on Danelaw language contact was carried out by linguists, using newly-developed models of pidginization (that is, the formation of “an uncomplicated second language developed and used for

¹⁴⁰ op. cit, 71-2.

¹⁴¹ Barnes, *op. cit.*, 67.

¹⁴² U. Weinreich, *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (Linguistic Circle of New York: New York, 1953), 92, Sawyer, *Age of the Vikings* (2nd edn.), 170-1.

communication between speakers of mutually incompatible languages”¹⁴³) and creolization (the adoption of a new, mixed language by the population of a given area).¹⁴⁴ The arguments are complex and suffer heavily from the absence of information on the longevity of Norse in England and on the mutual intelligibility of Old Norse and Old English, and are thus rather inconclusive.¹⁴⁵ One thing, for the linguists, is certain, however; the number of Scandinavians was comparatively high and their status equivalent to that of their ‘English’ peers.¹⁴⁶

Debate has revolved around bilingualism as the means for transfer between the two languages and whether those with Danish as a first language or those with English as a first language were the ones who became bilingual.¹⁴⁷ It has been suggested that there were two distinct phases of borrowing; from the settlement to 954, when Scandinavian held prestige and thus was a ‘target language’ for native English speakers, which is reflected by borrowings of a largely technical nature, which make up the vast bulk of the early loan words; and the period after the West Saxon ‘reconquest’, which saw a decline in the status of Scandinavian, and its eventual disappearance at an unknown date before the thirteenth century, which saw transference of the more everyday words “due to speakers of Scandinavian descent and their switch from Danish to English in connection with the death of Scandinavian in the Danelaw.”¹⁴⁸ Even the most recent discussion thus remains imprisoned within notions of fixed and easily discernible linguistic/ethnic communities.

A rather different version of this idea which, unusually, places the linguistic evidence

¹⁴³ Hines, “Scandinavian English: A creole in context”, 407.

¹⁴⁴ J. Geipel, *Viking Legacy*, N.Z. Domingue, “Middle English: another creole?”, in *Journal of Creole Studies* (1977), 89-100, P. Poussa, “The evolution of early Standard English: the creolization hypothesis”, in *Studia Anglia Posnanensia* 14 (1982), 69-85, Hines, *op. cit.* cf. Thomason and Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics*, 203-331, Hansen, “Scandinavian Linguistic Element”. See Barnes, *op. cit.*, 68 ff.

¹⁴⁵ Hansen, *op. cit.*, 88-9.

¹⁴⁶ Hansen, *op. cit.*, 78-80, Barnes, *op. cit.*, 69.

¹⁴⁷ Kastovsky, “Semantics and vocabulary”, 329-30.

¹⁴⁸ *op. cit.*, 331-2, Hansen, *op. cit.*, 78-9, 87-8.

in the context of other cultural developments and which avoids the emphasis upon ethnic polarities as a dynamic, has been put forward by John Hines (an academic, who is, significantly, more normally associated with the ‘Anglo-Saxon settlements’ discourse). He, too, believes that Scandinavian became dominant and a target language for a period after the settlements and that this was the period in which some everyday parts of Old Norse vocabulary were transferred into English, but suggests that relatively swiftly (from the very end of the ninth century) the processes may have been reversed as language became one element in an “extensive adoption of Anglo-Saxon culture in the settled areas, within which cultural process we find the careful preservation of elements of Scandinavian character. The product is a mixed culture which is consciously articulated at the highest social and most sophisticated artistic level, not simply the thoughtless confusion of cultures in contact.”¹⁴⁹ His arguments are backed up with reference to the rapid adoption of native burial practices and the allegedly equally rapid acceptance of Christianity by the settlers; they, and the adoption of a higher-level form of mixed Anglo-Scandinavian, represent a deliberate attempt to adjust to the local culture whilst preserving and stating their own identity.¹⁵⁰

Whilst Hines is undoubtedly unusual in integrating linguistic study with a knowledge of cultural history, it is equally true that historians and archaeologists have largely ignored the sizable body of work on linguistic contacts that has been built up in the past thirty years. The most recent study of the settlement, for instance, refers only to Weinreich and Sawyer(!) as authorities on Anglo-Scandinavian linguistic contact, and this is by no means unusual.¹⁵¹ The linguistic evidence as such remains to be integrated into understanding of the settlement; it is in toponymy that philologists have made their distinctive contribution.

Place-Names

As has been mentioned, the EPNS survey of the North Riding of Yorkshire of 1928 was the first of the society's volumes to tackle an area with substantial numbers of

¹⁴⁹ Hines, “Scandinavian English”, 417.

¹⁵⁰ *op. cit.*, 418, Barnes, *op. cit.*, 71-2.

¹⁵¹ Hadley, “And they proceeded to plough and to support themselves”, 71, n. 8.

Scandinavian place-names.¹⁵² That of the East Riding soon followed (in 1937), and, although it was only completely published in 1962, thanks to production problems and a drastic broadening in scope, the West Riding survey was commenced in 1927.¹⁵³ The Scandinavian place-names of the county had, however, already excited the attention of E.V. Gordon, and, in particular, of Eilart Ekwall.¹⁵⁴ These early commentators, numerous as they were, reached a consensus which was to prove highly influential. Scandinavian and Scandinavian-influenced names were a very significant component of the local toponymy, of a similar order to those entirely of English derivation, and in parts of the North Riding even exceeding them in numbers.¹⁵⁵ In addition to the Danish names there was, moreover, a significant number of Norwegian names, particularly in the West Riding, but present in all three, which Ekwall explained by an Hiberno-Norse migration from settlements in Lancashire and Cumbria, which had been more-or-less ignored by the written records.¹⁵⁶ It was generally assumed that it was possible to read these settlement-names as direct evidence for the areas in which Scandinavian influence was thickest and Smith went as far as to attempt to chart which parts of the county Danes and Norwegians had preferred.¹⁵⁷ It was, indeed, on the grounds of the distribution of Scandinavian settlement names that Yorkshire was pinpointed as the area of Northumbria shared out by the Danes in 876.¹⁵⁸ It was, furthermore, largely the heavy concentration of Scandinavian place-names that, in the

¹⁵² Smith, *Place-Names of the North Riding*, xiii.

¹⁵³ Smith, *Place-Names of the West Riding*, vol. 7, xi-xii.

¹⁵⁴ E. Ekwall, *Scandinavians and Celts in the North-West of England* (Lund, 1918), *idem.*, “The Scandinavian element”, in A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton (eds.), *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names* part 1 (EPNS vol. 1 (i)) (CUP: Cambridge, 1924), 55-92, *idem.*, “The Scandinavian settlement”, in H.C. Darby (ed.), *An Historical Geography of England Before A.D. 1800* (CUP: Cambridge, 1936), 133-164, 140-42, E.V. Gordon, “Scandinavian influence in Yorkshire dialects”, in *Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society* 24 (1923), 5-22, 18-19.

¹⁵⁵ Ekwall, “The Scandinavian settlement”, 140, Smith, *Place-Names of the North Riding*, xix-xx.

¹⁵⁶ “Scandinavians and Celts”, *passim.*, “The Scandinavian settlement”, 158

¹⁵⁷ Smith, *Place-Names of the North Riding*, xxiv-xxix, *idem.*, *Place-Names of the East Riding*, xxiv, *idem.*, *Place-Names of the West Riding*, 52 ff.

¹⁵⁸ Smith, *West Riding*, 45.

absence of *Domesday* sokemen, encouraged Stenton to see Yorkshire as a focus for heavy settlement.¹⁵⁹

In the post-war period, the efficacy of place-names as a guide to settlement seemed to be further proven with the publication in 1956 of A.H. Smith's map of the distribution of parish-names of Scandinavian origin.¹⁶⁰ The correspondence between the boundary of Scandinavian-influenced names and that established by the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum in 886 was truly startling, and the dense coverage of the northern Danelaw with Scandinavian names seemed only to confirm the picture that Stenton had drawn from institutional evidence of heavy settlement there.¹⁶¹ The map, or versions of it, have figured highly in nearly every treatment of the settlement since, and it has developed a history (and exerted an influence) all of its own.¹⁶²

However, the whole edifice of place-name study was about to be challenged by Peter Sawyer's rethinking of the Viking settlement. He argued that the large number of Scandinavian place-names of the northern Danelaw were a result not of extensive settlement but of the heavy Scandinavianisation of local dialects and name-giving habits between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. As most names were not recorded before *Domesday Book* and many not until long after, it was generally very difficult to tell when in the ongoing process of name replacement the Scandinavian-affected coinages had been made and certainly problematical to associate them with Scandinavian settlers or their descendants.¹⁶³ The place-names were thus an index only of the effect of Scandinavian settlement on the English language and could not be used as any sort of direct evidence of settlement, as Smith, Ekwall and Stenton had used them.

¹⁵⁹ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 520-2.

¹⁶⁰ A.H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements* (2 vols.) (EPNS vols. 25-26)(CUP: Cambridge, 1956), map 10.

¹⁶¹ The text of Alfred and Guthrum's treaty is translated in D. Whitelock (ed.) *English Historical Documents c. 500-1042* English Historical Documents 1 (2nd edn.) (London, 1979), no. 34.

¹⁶² G. Fellows Jensen, "Scandinavian influence on the place-names of England", in Sture Ureland and Broderick (eds.), *Language Contact in the British Isles*, 337-354, 337.

¹⁶³ Sawyer, "Density of the Danish settlement", 9-12.

Sawyer's attack on the place-names as evidence for migration prompted an indignant response from the toponymists, who naturally resented the imputation of the invalidity of their work, but it also encouraged them to relate their studies more strongly to geography and history. Kenneth Cameron, in particular, related the English and Danish names of settlements in the East Midlands to their topographical character, the quality of their land and their proximity to roads and rivers. These, he alleged, showed that, besides the military settlement, which he acknowledged, with Sawyer, to have been small, there had also been a substantial peasant settlement, invisible in the written record, which was responsible for the character of the place-name record.¹⁶⁴ He suggested, furthermore, that it was possible to chart the chronology of settlement by different types of name. Those which compounded a Scandinavian personal name with the English element *tūn* (the so-called 'Grimston hybrids') were located on the best land available in their regions and seem to have been wealthy, high-status settlements. Consequently Cameron suggested that these were old-established English settlements taken over by the Danish armies in the ninth century.¹⁶⁵ Fully Scandinavian names with the element *bý*, the most common type found in England, tended to be concentrated away from 'Grimston-hybrid' names, on land that was of good quality, but inferior to that of the 'Grimston hybrids'; these Cameron interpreted as "colonisation in the strict sense", by peasant settlers on new ground apart from the English.¹⁶⁶ Lastly, there were names in *-thorp*, which were settlements generally of low status and on poor land, which Cameron saw as reflecting cultivation by Danes of less attractive and unused land at some point after the original settlement.¹⁶⁷

Gillian Fellows Jensen applied the same analysis to Yorkshire in a monumental 1972

¹⁶⁴ Cameron, *Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs: the Place-Name Evidence*.

¹⁶⁵ K. Cameron, "Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the Five Boroughs: the place-name evidence Part III, the Grimston-hybrids", in Clemoes and Hughes (eds.), *England Before the Conquest*, 147-163. cf. F.M. Stenton, "The historical bearing of place-name studies: the Danish settlement of Eastern England", in *TRHS* (4th ser.) 24 (1942), 1-24.

¹⁶⁶ Cameron, *Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs*.

¹⁶⁷ Cameron, "Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the Five Boroughs: the place-name evidence Part II, place-names in *Thorp*", in *Medieval Scandinavia* 3 (1970), 35-49.

study, and in numerous papers since (indeed Yorkshire place-name study and Fellows Jensen have been practically synonymous in the past thirty years).¹⁶⁸ In the main her 1972 conclusions were in accord with Cameron's although she suggested, on the basis of sculptural evidence, that some areas colonised by the Danes preserved English names intact,¹⁶⁹ and furthermore noted both that some *bý* formations were probably merely new names for pre-existing English settlements,¹⁷⁰ and that some of the hybrids in *tūn* represented secondary settlement on poorer land.¹⁷¹ With this seeming corroboration, Cameron's 'secondary migration' won increasing support and gradually came to represent a new orthodoxy, as has been seen. It is important to note that the hypothesis of the secondary migration was based solely on the place-name evidence; all other evidence for mass migration had, by this time, effectively disappeared.¹⁷² Henceforth, therefore, all argument on the nature of the Danish migration would carry with it a heavy weight of interdisciplinary rancour.¹⁷³

The response of the minimalists to the reformulation and resurgence of toponymic

¹⁶⁸ G. Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire* (Navnestudier udgivet af Institut for Navneforskning 11 (Akademisk Forlag: Copenhagen, 1972), *idem.*, "Place-name research and northern history: a survey with a select bibliography of works published since 1945", in *Northern History* 8 (1973), 1-23, *idem.*, "The attitude of the Vikings to English place-names in Yorkshire", in *Selskab for Nordisk Filologi, Arsberetning 1971-73* (Einar Munksgaard: Copenhagen, 1975), 5-12, *idem.*, "Place-names and settlement in the North Riding of Yorkshire", in *Northern History* 14 (1978), 19-46, "York", in *Leeds Studies in English* (ns) 18 (1987), 141-55, *idem.*, "Amounderness and Holderness", in *Namn och Bygd* 78 (1990), 23-30, *idem.*, "Scandinavian settlement in Yorkshire - through the rear-view mirror", in B.E. Crawford (ed.), *Scandinavian Settlement in Northern Britain: Thirteen Studies of Place-Names in their Historical Context* (Leicester University Press: London and New York, 1995), 170-186.

¹⁶⁹ *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire*, 220.

¹⁷⁰ *op. cit.*, 206-210.

¹⁷¹ *op. cit.*, 202. See also Fellows Jensen, "Scandinavian settlement in Yorkshire", 171.

¹⁷² Hadley, "And they proceeded", 75.

¹⁷³ This was clearly visible in the debates on the subject in *Medieval Scandinavia* 2 (1969), 163-207. In particular see P.H. Sawyer, "The two Viking ages of Britain: a discussion", in *op. cit.*, 163-176, 169, and K. Cameron, "Linguistic and Place-Name Evidence", in *op. cit.*, 176-179, *passim*.

maximalism was to call into further question the circumstances in which place-names arose, and the whole thesis that there were significant areas of land unoccupied at the Viking conquest for the armies (or any peasant settlers in their wake) to colonize.¹⁷⁴ Basing his arguments both on a reassessment of *Domesday Book* and on archaeological pollen core analysis, Peter Sawyer claimed that using *Domesday* as a guide to settlement had yielded a false impression of the pre-Norman emptiness of the landscape, and that the Scandinavian names represented not new colonization, but the break up of the old great estates into smaller, privately-owned units.¹⁷⁵ Later Sawyer modified his views, asserting that the coining of names composed of a personal name compounded with *bý* and *thorp* (which is common in England but rare in Scandinavia) represented the development of rights by individuals to sell, lease or bequeath their previously-inalienable land, a process occurring throughout England, even in those areas untouched by alleged Scandinavian settlement. Therefore, Sawyer suggested, “it is more likely that most of these names mark a change in the status of the settlements rather than new colonization or a change of ownership.”¹⁷⁶

Study of the place-name evidence for Yorkshire and the Danelaw in general had developed far beyond the largely linguistic pursuit it had been in the days of Ekwall and was now deeply embedded in complex discussions of landscape history, that embraced legal, economic, social, archaeological and topographical evidence.¹⁷⁷ This further layer to the

¹⁷⁴ P.H. Sawyer, “Anglo-Saxon settlement: the documentary evidence”, in T. Rowley (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape* (BAR bs 6: Oxford, 1974), 108-19, *idem.*, “Medieval English settlement: New interpretations”, in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *English Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change* (1976), 1-7, *idem.*, “Some sources for the history of Viking Northumbria”, 7, *idem.*, *From Roman Britain to Norman England*, *idem.*, *Kings and Vikings*, 102-108, Richards, *Viking Age England*, 35-6, Hadley, “And they proceeded”, 71-75. cf C.D. Morris, “Aspects of Scandinavian settlement in Northern England: a review”, in *Northern History* 20 (1984), 1-22, 13-16.

¹⁷⁵ Sawyer, “Sources for the history of Viking Northumbria”, 7.

¹⁷⁶ Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, 106.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, Hadley, “And they proceeded”, 75. An illustration of early attempts to combine archaeological, historical and toponymic evidence is in the debate over one of the crosses from Middleton church in the Vale of Pickering, which was in an allegedly Scandinavian style, but found in a settlement with an irremediably English name: Sawyer, *Age of the Vikings* (2nd edn.), 163-66, Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire*, 118-9, 218-221, *idem.*, “Scandinavian settlement in Yorkshire - through the rear-view mirror”, 177, R.N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (Collins:

study of place-names has not been lost upon the toponymists themselves.¹⁷⁸ Gillian Fellow Jensen has increasingly come to see the formation of place-names in the context of the breaking-up of old estates,¹⁷⁹ and incorporated the notion that the personal-names compounded with *bý* and *thorp* might represent new individual rights over land into her interpretation of the place-names, although she was inclined to see the development of a land market in England as the direct or indirect effect of Danish settlement.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the impact of this recognition on debate in general has been limited. Most commentators have preferred to restrict themselves to what Dawn Hadley has called the “rather simplistic binary division of the landscape into areas of primary settlement and areas of secondary settlement on so-called marginal lands.”¹⁸¹

To sum up, the evidence of place-names has traditionally been used as the most emphatic proof of mass migration, through a direct correlation of the undoubtedly large numbers of names and the mass of peasant settlers surmised to be necessary to coin them. After Peter Sawyer challenged the simple interpretation of the toponymic evidence in the late 1950s, its practitioners became the strongest adherents of maximalism, and revised their methods, making them more ‘historical’, and increasingly relating their linguistic evidence to other factors such as topography and access to settlement sites. With continuing interest from historians of landscape and estate structures, the Viking-period toponymics of Yorkshire have become an increasingly complex subject, and, for some, they remain at the heart of debate on the question of numbers.

London, 1980), 209-14, Morris, “Aspects of Scandinavian settlement”, 10-11.

¹⁷⁸ *contra* Hadley, “And they proceeded”, 74.

¹⁷⁹ Fellows Jensen, “Scandinavian settlement in Yorkshire through the rear-view mirror”, *passim*.

¹⁸⁰ G. Fellows Jensen, “Signposts to settling”, in E. Roesdahl, J. Graham-Campbell, P. Connor and K. Pearson (eds.), *The Vikings in England* (The Anglo-Danish Viking Project: London, 1981), 78-82, 82.

¹⁸¹ Hadley, *op. cit.*, 71. E.g. H. Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain* (Blackwells: Oxford, 1994), 84-87, Clark, “Onomastics”, 484-5.

Personal Names

The study of Scandinavian personal names is closely inter-related with that of Danelaw place-names, and it shares all the same problems of source-materials. *Domesday Book* is, of course, a guide only to the great men and landholders of the area, and it is only in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the names of large numbers of the Danelaw peasantry are recorded.¹⁸² Women's names are still more obscure.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, from the early period of Viking migration study, personal names were recruited to the cause of shedding light upon the settlement.¹⁸⁴ Stenton drew attention to the fact that the greatest number and variety of Scandinavian names occurred in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, which, he claimed, confirmed the impression of other evidence that that was where the settlement was heaviest.¹⁸⁵ He also noted that new personal-name formation continued in England after the settlement, leaving names of Scandinavian type in the records of the Danelaw that are unknown in Scandinavia itself.¹⁸⁶ However, he gave especial importance to the Scandinavian female names; although noting that these were less numerous than those of men, he alleged that they were evidence that the settlement had been conducted by whole families and not just individuals.¹⁸⁷

As ever, it was Peter Sawyer who raised objections to this interpretation, although he based his ideas on work done by Ekwall which showed that fathers and brothers in the same

¹⁸² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 520.

¹⁸³ Stenton, "Danes in England", 155, Clark, "Onomastics", 467.

¹⁸⁴ E. Björkman, *Nordische Personennamen in England* (Studien zur englischen Philologie 37) (Max Niemeyer: Halle, 1910), *idem.*, *Zur englischen Namenkunde* (Studien zur englischen Philologie 47) (Max Niemeyer: Halle, 1912), F.M. Stenton, *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw* (British Academy: London, 1920), cxiv ff., O. von Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book* (Nomina Germanica 3) (Almqvist & Wiksell: Uppsala, 1937).

¹⁸⁵ Stenton, "Danes in England", 153-4, *idem.*, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 520.

¹⁸⁶ "Danes in England", 154.

¹⁸⁷ "Danes in England", 155, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 520. For a directly contrary interpretation of the women's names, see C. Clark, "Clark's first three laws of applied anthroponymics", in *Nomina* 3 (1979), 13-19, 17-18, *idem.*, "Onomastics", 467-8.

family might have names from allegedly opposing ethnicities,¹⁸⁸ and von Feilitzen's study which had shown the presence of Scandinavian names throughout England, and even in areas well outside the alleged area of Scandinavian settlement.¹⁸⁹ The Danelaw personal names, Sawyer claimed, were proof only of a change in fashion and the accessibility of new names to the population of the area, and could not be taken in any way as an indication of Scandinavian descent.¹⁹⁰

In 1968 Gillian Fellows Jensen's monograph exhaustively covered the Scandinavian names of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire (incidentally providing a very firm footing for the study of those place-names incorporating personal-name elements). Not surprisingly, her conclusions were maximalist; for her the vitality of the naming tradition and sheer numbers of names involved could be explained only by large numbers of peasant settlers.¹⁹¹ The personal names also attracted some rather limited attention from John Geipel in the early 1970s,¹⁹² but for the most part this rather specialised topic has dropped out of debate.¹⁹³ This has prompted calls for a re-evaluation of the reasons for changes in naming fashions and their relation to ethnic identity.¹⁹⁴

Conclusions

The linguistic evidence, or to describe it more accurately, the body of evidence normally studied by linguists, is large, very diverse, and will remain fundamental to interpretation of the Scandinavian settlement of Yorkshire. It has been studied seriously for

¹⁸⁸ Sawyer, "Density of the Danish settlement", 13, Ekwall, "The proportion of Scandinavian settlers in the Danelaw", 22-3.

¹⁸⁹ von Feilitzen, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁰ Sawyer, *op. cit.*, 13. See also Davis, "East Anglia and the Danelaw", 29.

¹⁹¹ Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire*, 23, *idem.*, "The Vikings in England: a review", 192-3.

¹⁹² Geipel, *Viking Legacy*, 165-79.

¹⁹³ Although see J. Insley, "Regional variation in Scandinavian personal nomenclature in England", in *Nomina* 3 (1979), 52-60.

¹⁹⁴ Hadley, "And they proceeded to plough", 89.

almost exactly a century, and in that time has developed far beyond the simple (?) compilation of lists of loan-words and drawing -up of place-name distribution maps into a very complex and broad field. The study of language contact itself has become an increasingly specialized and theoretical subject, using the comparative approaches of sociolinguistics. Meanwhile, onomastics has become integrated into the study of landscape history, requiring the usage of evidence and the application of techniques traditionally associated with historians and archaeologists. It is easy to see why the reconciliation of these opposing poles of philological study might prove difficult, and on published evidence, few scholars, with the possible exception of the late Cecily Clark have managed the task.

On the other hand, the difficulty of linguistic studies should not detract from their importance. There have, very recently, been isolated calls to understand the linguistic evidence not as a passive reflection of the numbers of settlers, but as an active tool in the forging of individual, regional (and perhaps ethnic?) identities. Significantly, they have come from scholars who are not, or not solely, linguists.¹⁹⁵ They present a challenge which philologists have not yet met, but which they must if the linguistic evidence for Scandinavian settlement is to be re-integrated with the rest of the discourse.

¹⁹⁵ Hines, "Scandinavian English", 417-420, Hadley, "And they proceeded", 95.

4.3 Archaeological Evidence

It is only comparatively lately that archaeological evidence has been enlisted systematically into enquiry on the effects of the Viking settlement. Although Scandinavian material culture has been recognized in England for almost as long as that of the 'Anglo-Saxon settlement', it has never turned up in quantities remotely approaching those of fifth-seventh century material. The efforts of W.G. Collingwood in the early decades of the twentieth century went some way towards establishing the general character of this material, and of the sculpture in particular, but archaeological evidence was, as we have seen, entirely absent from Stenton's 'traditional' interpretation of the settlements.¹⁹⁶

On the other hand, in the last twenty five years there has been a truly enormous expansion in Viking Age archaeology, which has made it perhaps the most dynamic of the three disciplines with respect to the Viking settlement, and has introduced archaeological modes of interpretation and attitudes to migration to a discourse where they previously had hardly any place at all. Viking Age archaeology is a healthy and expanding field, which is still gaining in its confidence and aspirations.¹⁹⁷

Viking period archaeology has tended to be quite traditional in its approaches, adopting classificatory art-historical and culture historical modes of interpretation, with little evidence until very recently of transition to newer concerns with symbolism.¹⁹⁸ It has been

¹⁹⁶ W.G. Collingwood, *Scandinavian Britain* (1908).

¹⁹⁷ Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology*, 6. Contrast David Wilson's rather tentative summaries of the scant evidence available for the Viking settlements in the late 1960s and early 1970s (D.M. Wilson, "Archaeological evidence for the Viking settlements and raids in England", *idem.*, "The Scandinavians in England", in Wilson (ed.), *Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, 393-403) with their 1990s equivalent, Julian Richards's extensive *Viking Age England* of 1992. Indeed, even Richard Hall's *Viking Age York* runs to some 120 pages on the evidence for that city alone, the vast majority of it collected in the last twenty years.

¹⁹⁸ Richards, *Viking Age England* was the first archaeological synthesis to engage with Scandinavian material culture from a modern theoretical viewpoint. It may be no coincidence that Richards came to the Viking period from the more methodologically-aware Anglo-Saxon settlements period.

mainly dedicated to recognising intrusive Scandinavian culture and interpreting this within a framework of English-Danish ethnic oppositions derived from the written record.¹⁹⁹ Inevitably, archaeological evidence, or the widespread lack of it, has been dragged into the perennial debate on the numbers involved in the settlement, although questions remain as to its usefulness for this purpose; it has been said that there is little that is distinctively Viking in English Viking-period archaeology.²⁰⁰

The range of types of material culture which have been studied for the effects of Viking settlement differs quite considerably from that for the Anglo-Saxon migrations, for it is rather more varied, including both rural and urban settlements, as well as cemeteries, silver hoards and sculpture, and for the most part it lacks the numerous burials by which Anglo-Saxon migrants were traditionally recognised.²⁰¹ It is probably largely as a result of this worrying absence, which might seem to damage a maximalist case, that archaeological evidence was, on the whole, excluded from traditional interpretations of the settlement. In addition to the general absence of grave-finds, Viking-period archaeology suffers from extreme patchiness; for instance, whilst evidence for tenth-century urban life in York is abundant in the extreme, rural settlements are very poorly understood.²⁰² Whilst new excavation is to a certain extent alleviating this problem, in general there are large areas of Viking activity about which the archaeological record still provides practically no information, despite all the developments of the last twenty years.

Graves, grave-markers and sculpture

In Yorkshire, as in the rest of Danelaw England, recognized 'Scandinavian' burials are almost phenomenally scarce. Intact graves are known from only half a dozen sites and represent less than 20 interred individuals.²⁰³ Even in the well-excavated city of York only

¹⁹⁹ Wilson, "Archaeological evidence for the Viking settlements and raids", Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology*, 5-6.

²⁰⁰ Richards, *op. cit.*, 69.

²⁰¹ Hall, *op. cit.*, 6.

²⁰² *ibid.*

²⁰³ Richards, *Viking Age England*, 111-114.

a handful of accompanied burials in the 'Scandinavian' style have been discovered (in the churchyards of St. Mary's Bishophill Senior and Junior).²⁰⁴ Other probable graves of the period from both the city and the county as a whole, of which there are several hundred, show no signs whatsoever of Scandinavian contacts and are unremarkable for England in this period.²⁰⁵ The contexts in which the few known accompanied 'Scandinavian' burials are found are remarkably consistent and worthy of mention, for it is notable that they are normally located in churchyards, i.e. the pre-existing focus for communal, and Christian, burial.

The scarcity of burials has long been recognized, and contrasted with the abundant burials of the 'Anglo-Saxon settlement'. This seemed to present a considerable problem, and apologists for a maximalist interpretation were not slow to come forward with explanations for the daunting lack of evidence for the settling hordes. These took a number of forms; Shetelig, for instance, suggested that the Danes had abandoned their 'traditional' customs in the course of prolonged campaigning in the West, while some pre-war commentators attempted to sustain the implausible case that the Danish armies were restricted to the towns and that all trace of their burials had been lost amidst 1000 years of sustained activity.²⁰⁶ A more convincing case was put together by Dorothy Whitelock for the eastern Danelaw, arguing that the Scandinavians of the Danelaw had swiftly converted to Christianity and adopted the burial rites and cemeteries of their Christian English neighbours.²⁰⁷ The main strength of Whitelock's argument had lain in documentary evidence for swift conversion, but David Wilson later made a similar case for the northern Danelaw using archaeological evidence.²⁰⁸ On the strength of analogy with the archaeologically better-attested Isle of Man, Wilson argued that the Viking settlers "buried their dead in the

²⁰⁴ Hall, *Viking Age York*, 44-45.

²⁰⁵ *op. cit.*, 46.

²⁰⁶ H. Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* vol. vi (Oslo, 1954), 86, Sawyer, "Density of Danish settlement", 7.

²⁰⁷ D. Whitelock, "The conversion of the Eastern Danelaw", in *Saga Book of the Viking Society* 12 (1941), 159-76.

²⁰⁸ D.M. Wilson, "The Vikings' relationship with Christianity in Northern England", in *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association* (3rd ser.) 30 (1967), 37-46.

churchyards of the newly conquered country, respecting the sacred nature of the existing burial ground” and taking on some of the characteristics of ‘Christian’ burial in the process.²⁰⁹ Such evidences as there then were of Viking burial might well not survive the lengthy and continuous usage of such sites up to the present day.²¹⁰ With this first step taken, the pantheistic religion of the Vikings could easily accept the Christian God (perhaps before the end of the ninth century) and full conversion and assimilation swiftly followed.²¹¹

The minimalists, on the other hand, were more than ready to see the graves as directly representative of the numbers involved with the settlement; the problem of the absent Danish burials disappeared, they suggested, if the assumption that there had been large numbers present in England was discarded.²¹² Later, however, Peter Sawyer did accept the argument that Viking burials had quickly entered Christian graveyards, albeit with the important proviso that this did not necessarily mean that the Danes themselves had converted.²¹³

The advent of processual and symbolic approaches to burial archaeology in the 1980s and 1990s effectively severed the direct linkage between numbers of alleged ‘Viking’ graves and the numbers of Scandinavian settlers in the country. Nevertheless, interest in the problem of the Viking burials and what they might, or might not, suggest about Scandinavian relations to Christianity continued unabated.²¹⁴ The way was now, however, laid open for interpretations that focused on deliberate usage of mortuary ritual for

²⁰⁹ *op. cit.*, 44-5.

²¹⁰ *op. cit.*, 44.

²¹¹ Wilson, *op. cit.*, 46, Whitelock, *op. cit.*, 175-6, Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, 44. cf. J. Graham-Campbell, “The Scandinavian Viking-Age burials of England - some problems of interpretation”, in Rahtz, Dickinson and Watts (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries 1979*, 379-82.

²¹² Sawyer, “Density of the Danish settlement”, 7, Hodges, *Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, 156.

²¹³ Sawyer, *Age of the Vikings* (1st edn.), 63-4, Graham-Campbell, *op. cit.*, 381, makes the point that Wilson had never stated explicitly that Scandinavian burials in Christian graveyards were themselves Christian.

²¹⁴ J. Graham-Campbell, “Pagans and Christians”, in *History Today* (Oct. 1986), 24-8, Hadley, “Ecclesiastical organization in the Danelaw”, 118-9.

conveying political messages about identity and power.

By burying their dead in acknowledged local ritual centres, regardless of whether or not this implied acceptance of Christianity, the settlers both stamped their own authority on their localities and portrayed themselves as legitimate landowners.²¹⁵ In adopting the form at least of local ritual, Viking leaders might hope to curry favour with the local populace.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, the burial ritual of the area did not remain entirely unchanged throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, for the sculptured stone grave markers provide abundant evidence for a new, and distinctively Anglo-Scandinavian, mood.

Sculptural Evidence

It is an interesting irony that whilst Viking burial is so sketchily understood, the Anglo-Scandinavian sculptured stones which almost certainly served as markers for Viking Age graves, have the longest and perhaps the most developed scholarly tradition of any aspect of Viking-Age archaeology in Britain.²¹⁷ Yorkshire has a particularly prominent place in this tradition, for Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture is concentrated at its very densest in that county.²¹⁸ Modern study of the sculpture was effectively initiated by W.G. Collingwood in the first quarter of the twentieth century.²¹⁹ Although Collingwood used the distribution of sculpture to demonstrate the respective settlement areas of Danes and Norse, and certainly believed in settlement on a not-inconsiderable scale, his prime concerns lay not so much with shedding light upon the density and nature of settlement as with more purely art-historical considerations, and with the sources of the ornament and conception of the cross slabs and

²¹⁵ Richards, *Viking Age England*, 118.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, Hines, “Scandinavian English”, 417, Hadley, “And they proceeded”, 83.

²¹⁷ Numerous antiquarians from Leland onwards drew attention to the decorated stones of Yorkshire. See Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture* 27.

²¹⁸ See J.T. Lang, “Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture in Yorkshire”, in Hall (ed.), *Viking Age York and the North*, 11-20.

²¹⁹ W.G. Collingwood, “Anglian and Anglo-Danish sculpture in the North Riding”, *idem.*, “Anglian and Anglo-Danish sculpture at York”, *idem.*, “Anglian and Anglo-Danish sculpture in the East Riding with addenda to the North Riding”, *idem.*, “Anglo-Saxon sculptured stone”, *idem.*, “Anglian and Anglo-Danish sculpture in the West Riding”, *idem.*, *Northumbrian Crosses of the pre-Norman Age*.

the distinctive ‘hogback’ monuments.²²⁰

For many scholars besides Collingwood, the various types of decorated stone work have seemed to indicate, or even to symbolise, the type of cultural mixing that took place in Yorkshire as a result of the Danish and Hiberno-Norse settlements.²²¹ Decorative stone sculpture was entirely unknown in Denmark and Norway until considerably after the settlement of England.²²² The monastic tradition of stone sculpture in pre-Viking Northumbria, by contrast, was healthy and well-established, and the habit of using decorated stones as grave-markers undoubtedly represents a continuation of this indigenous tradition.²²³ However, the great increase in popularity that sculpture underwent in the Viking period, together with considerable changes in style and content and the adoption of Scandinavian motifs mean that the Anglo-Scandinavian sculptural tradition is increasingly seen as a novel and special development, a new type of culture with both English and Scandinavian antecedents, but born of the highly specialised circumstances of the northern Danelaw.²²⁴ Only in these circumstances could the monastic tradition of decorated stone be adapted to new, non-monastic, purposes in the way that it was, or could total innovations such as the ‘hogbacks’ arise.²²⁵

Given the size of the sculpture corpus amidst the then scarcity of archaeological evidence of the Scandinavians, it is no surprise that it too was dragged into the debate on settlement and numbers, in particular over the question of the ‘Middleton cross’ (see section 4.2). As early as 1978 however, this approach was being criticised as placing far too great an emphasis upon the “ethnicity” of the sculpture while ignoring such factors as the

²²⁰ Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses of the pre-Norman Age*, 120 ff.

²²¹ Richards, *Viking Age England*, 128, Lang, “Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture”, 20, R.N. Bailey, “The hammer and the cross”, in Roesdahl et al. (eds.), *The Vikings in England*, 83-94, 83-4, Higham, *Northumbria*, 198.

²²² Bailey, “Hammer and the cross”, 83, Lang, *op. cit.*, 13, Richards, *op. cit.*, 119.

²²³ Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology*, 39.

²²⁴ Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, 76-84.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, J.T. Lang, “The hogback: a Viking colonial monument”, in *ASSAH* 3, 85-176.

influence of the availability of the raw materials upon distribution.²²⁶ Perhaps even more fundamentally, Richard Bailey pointed out in 1980 that the dating of the sculpture was by no means fine enough to associate particular pieces with particular stages of the settlement, and that, in any case, association of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture with the distribution of settled Danes was predicated upon an unjustified assumption that the sculpture would have been produced exclusively for Scandinavian patrons.²²⁷ Latterly therefore, such direct ethnic associations have not been made, and the Anglo-Scandinavian style of sculpture has been viewed as a means of representing power available to all regardless of their descent.²²⁸ Sculpture now figures regularly alongside place-name, written evidence and other types of archaeology in debates about landholding and assertion of individual rights during the fragmentation of estates, but it is seldom, if ever, used to make direct statements about ethnicity as was the case in the late 1960s.

Rural Settlement and Landscape

The greatest lacuna in studies of the Scandinavian settlement of England has always been the complete absence of archaeological evidence of the settlements themselves.²²⁹

Peter Addyman's 1978 comment reflects a common complaint of Viking-Age archaeologists even up to the present day.²³⁰ Prompted by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which places the settlement of the Danes explicitly in a rural and agrarian context –“And in this year Halfdan shared out the lands of Northumbria, *and they were engaged in ploughing and in making a living for themselves*”– archaeologists have sought traces of the Vikings in the country, both through distinctively Scandinavian types of settlement or structures, and, more recently, through changes they may have brought about in the landscape and in the means of agricultural exploitation. For the most part, however, such traces have proved

²²⁶ Lang, “Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture in Yorkshire”, 11.

²²⁷ Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, 210-11.

²²⁸ Bailey, *op. cit.*, 211, Richards, *op. cit.*, 120.

²²⁹ P.V. Addyman, “Introduction”, in Hall (ed.) *Viking Age York and the North*, 1-3, 2.

²³⁰ Richards, *Viking Age England*, 37.

exceedingly elusive. This has been ascribed to the likelihood that many of the more successful rural settlements will have survived to become nuclei for later mediaeval settlements and have consequently been concealed or destroyed by subsequent activity,²³¹ and to the inadequate excavation of settlements of this period that has been carried out,²³² but perhaps most crucially it has been seen as the consequence of the difficulty in ascribing an ethnicity to the occupants of rural settlements. The finds from rural settlements are few and normally consist of basic utilitarian items of domestic and agricultural equipment, which do not easily lend themselves to ethnic identification.²³³ Nor is there any known drastic change in building types which can be ascribed to the Vikings. To all extents and purposes the rural settlements of the Vikings are indistinguishable from those of the native population.

Recognition of this fact has shifted scholarly attention away from attempts to perceive the Vikings directly through distinctive material culture to attempting to understand their role in a number of developments in the landscape normally seen as taking place in this period; the break-up of estates, the nucleation of settlements and stabilization in their location, and the development of open-field farming.²³⁴ Wharram Percy, in the Wolds, has been frequently cited as indicative of some of these processes. Although the dating of the site is sometimes problematic, the laying out of the peasant tofts and crofts may have occurred in the tenth century.²³⁵ Nevertheless, the establishment of a *causal* relationship as

²³¹ Addyman, *op. cit.*, 2, Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology*, 22, Richards, *op. cit.*, 37.

²³² Until recently the only reasonably full excavations of Viking period rural settlements in Yorkshire were those at Wharram Percy (Beresford and Hurst, *Wharram Percy: Deserted Medieval Village*) and at Gauber High Pasture, Ribbleshead (A. King, "Gauber high pasture, Ribbleshead - an interim report", in Hall (ed.), *Viking Age York and the North*, 21-25. These have recently been joined by the site at Cottam, in the Wolds, which has produced metalwork from the 8th-10th centuries and pottery from the 10th century, but which is, at the time of writing, only partially published: D. Haldenby, "An Anglian site on the Yorkshire Wolds", in *YAJ* 62 (1990), 51-62, *idem.*, "An Anglian site on the Yorkshire Wolds", in *YAJ* 64 (1992), 25-40. See also J.D. Richards, "Cottam, Burrow House Farm", in *Medieval Archaeology* 38 (1994), 228, *idem.*, "Cottam, Burrow House Farm", in *Medieval Archaeology* 40 (1996), 269.

²³³ King, *op. cit.*, 25.

²³⁴ Richards, *Viking Age England*, 39, 70.

²³⁵ *op. cit.*, 39, M.W. Beresford and J.G. Hurst, "Wharram Percy: a case study in microtopography", in Sawyer (ed.), *English Medieval Settlement*, 52-85.

well as coincidence of the Viking settlement and such developments seems remote.

Urban Settlement

The contrast between knowledge of rural and urban settlement in the Viking-Age Danelaw is truly startling, for excavation in York in the past twenty five years has produced a wealth of material which in amount alone must equal the Viking Age archaeology of the whole of the rest of England put together. The “Viking dig” has been followed up with exemplary academic and popular publications on all aspects of the material culture of the Anglo-Scandinavian city. Thus a considerable body of new evidence has become available, which together with data from other towns both within and without the Danelaw, has initiated a flurry of interest in the development of towns and markets in England in the Viking Age.

The main research priority of this work with regard to the Danes has been to determine the extent of the Viking role in urban origins; enquiring if there was anything particularly Scandinavian in the meteoric development of York in the period, or if this was just the local manifestation of circumstances which were affecting much of England at the time and which were not directly related to the presence of Scandinavian settlers.²³⁶ York's growth is certainly remarkable. The pre-existing trading settlement seems to have been disrupted by the Viking raids, and there is evidence of a mid-ninth century movement away from the exposed riverfront towards a more defensible site between the rivers Ouse and Foss, and close to the old Roman legionary fortress.²³⁷ The population of this settlement has been suggested to have been between one and two thousand. By the time of Domesday Book, however, the city held some 1800 building plots and its size has consequently been placed at around 10000.²³⁸ Following the refurbishment and extension of the defences c.900 the area enclosed was at least 36 ha., larger than the Scandinavian settlements at Hedeby

²³⁶ Richards, *Viking Age England*, 43.

²³⁷ *op. cit.*, 46.

²³⁸ Hall, *Viking Age Archaeology*, 33.

and Birka at their respective heights.²³⁹ Within this area a network of streets grew up, many of which have Scandinavian names, and activity and occupation seems to have been intense, particularly in the area closest to the Ouse and Foss, including both commerce and manufacturing production.

There is not, however, as Julian Richards has pointed out, anything particularly distinctively “Viking” about York, apart from a fashion for artwork in the Scandinavian style, which does not of course necessarily represent ethnic Scandinavians. The Danes had not founded the trading settlements at York, and indeed, in parallel examples where no pre-existing proto-urban sites existed, such as on the Isle of Man, the Vikings had not created them.²⁴⁰ According to Richard Hodges, Scandinavian immigrants were a vital final ingredient in an economic take-off of northern England for which many of the components were already in place in the late ninth century.²⁴¹

Like so many other parts of the archaeological evidence, the Viking role in urban origins is at best unclear. Certainly the settlement coincided with significant economic changes, but discerning cause and effect is extremely difficult.

Conclusion

Although Viking Age archaeology has expanded massively in the last few years, it has not become dominant in interpretations of the ninth-eleventh centuries as it has in those of the fourth-seventh. This is partly to do with the superiority of the written and linguistic records for the later period, but is also because the archaeological record either cannot or has not been used to throw light upon the settlements. This is perhaps at least partly because the expansion in Viking period archaeology coincided with the theoretical retreat from belief in the ‘ethnicity of material culture’, but it is also because there has always been little upon which to build such a case. There is, it is often said, not much that is Viking or Danish about the Viking Age archaeology of the Danelaw.

²³⁹ Richards, *op. cit.*, 46.

²⁴⁰ *op. cit.*, 50.

²⁴¹ Hodges, *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, 155.

The introduction of archaeological ideas about migration to the debate is however very welcome, and seems likely to breathe new life into a question which had become bogged down in the protracted discussion on numbers. Beyond this, it is archaeology alone that now seems capable of producing the ‘new’ evidence which may help to illuminate how the settlers used the array of material cultural traditions available to them to construct new, and probably highly localised, identities.²⁴²

²⁴² Hadley, “And they proceeded”, 93.

4.4 Discussion

The Scandinavian migration discourse arose at a time and in circumstances completely different from those in which thought on the other migrations developed. It has been studied systematically for only around a century, but those hundred years have been ones in which the study of early medieval migrations as a whole has passed through considerable methodological and theoretical change. The temptation to compare the development of thought on the Viking migrations with that on the Anglo-Saxon settlement is almost overwhelmingly strong, for they have followed broadly similar methodological and theoretical trajectories; from unabashed maximalism and migrationism through debates on numbers to a questioning of the relevance and importance of migration, and they have, for much of their duration, asked the same questions: How many settlers were there? Were they a social élite or drawn from all ranks of society? How did newcomers and indigenes acculturate to each other's ways and how long did the process of processes take?

The parallels between the development of the two discourses can be explained not just by seeing them as similar responses to broader theoretical trends, but as due to the ongoing habit of scholars to compare each with the other, and consciously to apply thinking derived from the Anglo-Saxon migration discourse to the Viking settlements discourse and vice versa. On the other hand, although the general trends of both discourses have been in the same direction, there have been substantial differences in the rate and the way in which they have occurred; for instance, the appearance of a minimalist case for the Viking migrations in the 1950s swiftly provoked a passionate and highly polarised debate, whereas the trend towards mimalism in the Anglo-Saxon settlement discourse has been drawn out over the course of the cnetury, and it is only in the last twenty years that it has become the focus of such extreme attention. Equally, whilst both discourses have seen an increasing role for the evidence of material culture and for the interpretive modes of archaeologists, in the Anglo-Saxon migration discourse this took place gradually, throughout the twentieth century, whereas for the Vikings it has occurred suddenly and dramatically in the last twenty years.

Yorkshire and the Vikings

As the Scandinavian settlement affected only one area of England, it has proved remarkably attractive to those attempting to claim some sort of special racial or cultural status for particular regions. There are, for instance, strong strains of Yorkshire ‘nationalism’ in Gordon’s 1923 paper on “Scandinavian influence in Yorkshire dialects”, one of the founding works of the maximalist interpretation for the county.²⁴³ The sense of the difference of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire from the rest of England is the very essence of the Stentonian interpretation, and it is easy to see the usefulness of such ideas to the construction and legitimation of present-day regional identities.

Paradoxically, however, it is in the past 30 years, when the Stentonian orthodoxy was being called into question, that the Viking past has come to be adopted most strongly into popular notions of the ‘Yorkshireness’ of Yorkshire. This is perhaps attributable to two concurrent and linked developments; the explosion of popular interest in the Vikings, and the excavations at York, leading to the opening of the Jorvik Viking Centre.²⁴⁴ The first of these phenomena has been widely remarked upon, yet it remains difficult to explain.²⁴⁵ The fact remains that the Vikings have held a fascination for the general public in the latter half of the twentieth century completely unmatched by any other aspect of the early medieval past, a fascination which has fostered a demand for books, museum exhibitions and television series which normally resource-starved academics and publishers have been only too happy to meet.²⁴⁶ The so-called ‘Viking dig’ directed by Richard Hall and York Archaeological Trust at Coppergate in York was another scholarly engagement which both met and helped to foster the demand for all things Viking. It was this and the success of the Jorvik Viking Centre above all which cemented the popular association of the now-fashionable and glamorous Vikings and Yorkshire, with some startling results. A search of

²⁴³ Gordon, “Scandinavian influence”, passim.

²⁴⁴ On the Jorvik Viking Centre, see P. Addyman and A. Gaynor, “The Jorvik Viking Centre: an experiment in archaeological site conservation”, in *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship* 3 (1984), 9-18.

²⁴⁵ e.g. Wormald, “Viking studies: Whence and whither?”, 128.

²⁴⁶ For instance, the British museum Vikings exhibitions of the early 1980s, the BBC television series “*Vikings!*” and any number of popularizing histories. See Fell, “Norse studies: then, now and hereafter”, 95 on the pressures to produce “more glossy books, preferably with the word ‘Viking’ somewhere in the title”.

a recent York telephone directory yields 18 local businesses incorporating the word ‘Viking’ in their names (including “Viking Ceilings” and “Viking Computer Services”), and 11 that use ‘Jorvik’ (not including the Jorvik Viking Centre itself).²⁴⁷ Nor is the phenomenon by any means confined to York, as the Hull-based (but county wide) local radio station “Viking Radio” proves.

Popular interest, and the funding that it has brought with it, has encouraged publication on Viking Yorkshire to an unprecedented extent, much of it associated with York Archaeological Trust.²⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that much of this work has had to satisfy a desire for Yorkshire Vikings with the conclusion that they are largely invisible in the county. Nevertheless, the saleability of the Vikings remains an important dynamic in the development not just of popular attitudes but of academic thought.

²⁴⁷ *York and District Phone Book* (British Telecom: Bradford, 1996).

²⁴⁸ R. Hall, *The Viking Dig* (Bodley Head: London, 1984), *idem.*, *Viking Age York*.

Chapter 5: The Norman Conquest

5.0 Introduction

In approaching the study of the Norman Conquest its most striking features are the ways in which it differs from the other English early mediaeval migration discourses. Unlike the English and Viking settlements, that of the Normans is still studied almost entirely on the basis of written evidence of one sort or another, with practically no input from archaeologists. In the written sources of the eleventh- and twelfth- centuries there exists a body of information that is massive, well-organised and near-contemporary, which has long persuaded researchers that they can, with confidence, chart the character of the migration on this basis alone. The archaeological record, by contrast seems to lack most of those elements that have beguiled researchers into thinking that archaeology can be used to chart the other migrations: a diagnostic burial record, significant changes in estate structures etc. The chapter on "sources" in one of the most recent books on the subject does not mention archaeology at all.¹

The questions traditionally debated by scholars of the Conquest are those suggested by their (written) sources: the origins of feudalism, the degree of institutional continuity and whether Norman England was a "colony". There has been no general shift towards an archaeologically-defined research agenda as there has with the earlier migration episodes. Of course, in a discourse of such abiding interest there has been substantial change, as new aspects have emerged and become prominent, but it has never seen the paradigmatic change that swept across the study of the other migrations in the 1960s and 1970s.

Another profound difference with the other migration discourses considered here is that the question of numbers is not one that has more than passingly detained the attention of scholars. Convinced as they are that their sources can convey a genuinely representative view of the character of the Conquest, they have been prepared confidently to characterise

¹ B. Golding, *Conquest and Colonisation: The Normans in Britain 1066-1100* (Macmillans: London, 1994).

the Norman settlement as an elite conquest, which displaced the English aristocracy, but had little or no effect on the peasant bulk of the population, and did not introduce significant numbers of new settlers.² There has been, it must be admitted, a strain of opinion that has seen the Norman conquerors as numbering in the hundreds of thousands and as making up a significant proportion of the post-1066 population, but its influence has been limited (see below). There has been no attempt therefore to claim some sort of direct relationship between the numbers of migrants (consensually perceived to have been small) and their degree of influence (consensually acknowledged to have been considerable), nor has any controversy between maximalists and minimalists emerged along these lines.

This does not, in any way, imply that nationalist beliefs have not been a feature of the debate. On the contrary, from the sixteenth century onwards, it has been a crucial episode in Whig and nationalist interpretations of English history. Hardly a single generation of historians has failed to have something to say about the Norman Conquest, and most of them have seen it precisely in explicitly nationalistic terms, generally identifying with the English and lamenting the defeat which subverted their supposedly “representative” constitution.³ Perhaps precisely because of the identification of the Normans as ‘them’ (as opposed to ‘us’, the English), they have been seen as alien and not really a part of the history of the English people.⁴ At any rate it has tended to be the effects of the conquest that have been the subject of debate, whilst the relative numbers of natives and immigrants, and the nature of the racial admixture that they produced has been deemed to be effectively beyond the bounds of question.

Because of the ways in which it differs from the other migration episodes, and the greater confidence historians have felt in their knowledge of it, the Norman Conquest has frequently been used as a ‘control’, the argument being that, as the Conquest is known to

² For instance, see H. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (2nd edn.) (Longman: London, 1991) (1st edn., London, 1962), 66.

³ See Douglas, *The Norman Conquest and British Historians*, Hill, *The Norman Yoke*, R. Allen Brown, *The Normans and the Norman Conquest* (Constable & Co: London, 1969), 1.

⁴ J.R. Green, for instance, terms the whole period from the death of Æthelred to the loss of Normandy as “England under Foreign Kings”, *Short History*, 57-108.

have been an elite settlement, it is possible to judge the effects of such a settlement on place-names and the archaeological record.⁵ In the case of the Norman Conquest these effects are frequently characterised as slight, and it has thus been argued that all early mediaeval migrations consisting only of an elite settlement would have an equally meagre effect on toponyms and material culture. The Viking and English settlements, therefore, which had a relatively massive effect on these, could not, it is frequently argued, have been merely elite settlements.

The Norman Conquest and Yorkshire

Although in most ways the study of the Norman Conquest of Yorkshire has closely followed that of England as a whole, in recent years there has been growing recognition of the fact that Norman involvement in the north was of a rather different character from elsewhere, and that study of it raises a number of issues that are unique to the area.⁶ The differences lie, however, not just in the manner and style of the Norman settlement but in the evidence by which it is known. It is a matter of special regret that the idiosyncratic situation of post-Conquest Yorkshire is known mainly through a written record which is in many ways extremely defective.

The narrative evidence for Yorkshire and the North in this period is, perhaps surprisingly, quite good. The D and E manuscripts of the Chronicle, which are the only versions to render any substantive account of events post-1066, were both based upon a lost northern recension and are thus rather fuller in their treatment of northern events than might be expected, although they provide little more than a description of events, and of William's devastation of the North.⁷ To this can be added the various Latin chronicles of the Anglo-Norman historians which added considerable further information, particularly on the disastrous effects of the Norman army. This relative wealth of evidence, however, can not

⁵ Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, 236.

⁶ The chief author of this revolution in attitudes has been W.E. Kapelle, in his book *The Norman Conquest of the North: The Region and Its Transformation 1000-1135*.

⁷ D.M. Palliser, "Domesday book and the 'Harrying of the North'", in *Northern History* 29 (1993), 1-23, 3.

make up for the very pronounced deficiencies of the Yorkshire *Domesday*. It has been called “the least informative and useful of all the county Domesdays.”⁸ It suffers not just from the lack of comprehensiveness that afflicts all the *Domesdays*, but from peculiar inconsistencies all its own, amongst which the most striking is the bewildering range (some 12 types) of diplomatic applied in its entries. Traditionally the chaotic nature of the Yorkshire text was seen as a direct consequence of the ‘harrying’ and disruption in the county.⁹ Nevertheless, despite noting the difficulties, many were prepared to use *Domesday Book* as direct evidence of the damaged state of the county in 1087.¹⁰ More recently, scholars have been rather more sceptical about the evidence of *Domesday Book*. On the basis of the changes in diplomatic and of clear changes and developments during the process of compilation in the conception of the “manor”, and of what was to be conveyed by the text, David Roffe has recently argued convincingly that the Yorkshire *Domesday* was the first county volume to be compiled by the Exchequer scribe, and that, perhaps as a consequence of poor planning, he only developed a standard format in the course of compilation.¹¹ This causes great, perhaps insurmountable, difficulties for those seeking to use *Domesday Book* as evidence of the society and economy of Yorkshire. The differences and inconsistencies in the text render comparison with other counties, or even within Yorkshire, virtually impossible, and suggest that the observed peculiarities of the county's entries may be a product as much of their recording as of the actual state of things.

The difficulties with *Domesday Book* are particularly regrettable given the scarcity of pre-Conquest charters from the area to serve as comparative material. Although it may be possible to use later charters to shed further light, it is possible that much of the economy, society and manorial structure of Yorkshire at the Conquest is irrecoverable.¹²

⁸ D. Roffe, “Domesday Book and Northern Society: a reassessment”, in *EHR* 105 (1990), 310-336, 313.

⁹ Palliser, “Domesday Book and the ‘harrying of the North’”, 15, F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond: three essays in the early history of England* (CUP: Cambridge, 1897), 139, n.2, R.W. Finn, *Making and Limitations of the Yorkshire Domesday* (Borthwick Institute: York, 1972), 3.

¹⁰ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 605.

¹¹ D. Roffe, “Domesday Book and Northern Society”, 323.

¹² Roffe, *op. cit.*, 334-6.

A second factor to be taken into consideration in approaching the Norman conquest in the North is the whole question of the area's autonomy. Norman involvement in Yorkshire was not merely a straightforward matter of loyal "English" struggling against foreign intruders, but must be placed in the context of Northumbria's rather ambivalent position within 'England'.¹³ The destruction of the Viking kingdom of York and the West Saxon conquest of the area in 954 had led to an uneasy and, at 1066, an unresolved, relationship between the kings of England and their northernmost province. The kings rarely ventured north of the Humber, nor did they hold large amounts of land in the north, but they did retain the important rights of appointment of the archbishop and of the earl, and exercised them carefully to give themselves a voice in the north and to prevent the concentration of too much power in the hands of a single family.¹⁴ Effective power in the area, however, was wielded by the earl himself, and it was frequently difficult for the king to impose his will. The kings seem also to have had to accept rather lower levels of tribute from Yorkshire and to acknowledge, at least in theory, its legal autonomy.¹⁵ Nor could they be assured of its loyalty; certainly the failure of the Dane Swein to raid Yorkshire during Æthelred II's reign suggests the expectation of a more hospitable reception for Danes in the county than they could expect elsewhere. On the other hand, it is far from clear that Yorkshire and the North were actively secessionist; certainly by 1065 and the revolt against Tostig, there was no question that even a serious rebellion would threaten to remove Yorkshire from England.¹⁶ Relations between the men of York and the house of Bamburgh in the far north were very strained, and a general northern separatism was thus impossible.¹⁷ Thus at 1066, the Normans entered a situation that was highly politically charged, but of which they had almost no experience.

¹³ Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, 3-4.

¹⁴ D. Whitelock, "The dealings of the kings of England with Northumbria in the tenth and eleventh centuries", in P. Clemoes (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of their History and Culture, Presented to Bruce Dickins* (Bowes and Bowes: London, 1959), 70-88, Higham, *Northumbria*, 211.

¹⁵ Kapelle, *op. cit.*, 11.

¹⁶ Wormald, "*Engla lond*", 1-2.

¹⁷ Kapelle, *op. cit.*, 26.

When William started to attempt to govern and tax in the north, his rule was looked upon not primarily as foreign domination, but as yet another attempt by a southern king to rob the area of its autonomy and privileges, and to deny the authority of the local ruling families. This was resisted in time-honoured fashion, with the murder of his agents, and the welcoming of a Danish army in 1069. However the Norman response was to devastate the north in the so-called “harrying”, which effectively destroyed the regional aristocracy, shattering the local culture and finally ending all separatist tendencies. The rebuilding of the North proceeded only comparatively gradually in the 1070s and 1080s, as the upper class was replaced and Normans got to grips with the brigandage that was a direct consequence of the harrying. Once Yorkshire did re-emerge, it was a very different place from the pre-1066 county; pacified and increasingly integrated into the English kingdom. Thus, for Yorkshire, the Conquest represents much more than a change in the upper classes. It spelled the end of the last shreds of Northumbrian autonomy and of the boundary on the Humber that had been a fact of political life throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

The third factor to be taken into account in studying Conquest-period Yorkshire is the question of waste. This is one of the most starkly apparent features of the area and period and has been the subject of an enormous amount of speculation. The narrative sources are extremely emphatic in their description of the devastation brought about by William's armies in 1069-70: the E text of the Chronicle records that Yorkshire was “completely devastated”, Orderic Vitalis claims that 100000 died in the famine following the harrying, whilst Symeon of Durham asserts that there was not a village inhabited between York and Durham.¹⁸ Even if, as seems likely, these are exaggerations, there can be little doubt either of the extreme ferocity of the harrying or of the profound psychological impact it had upon observers.¹⁹ Many modern historians have looked to *Domesday Book* for the effects of the harrying, and, in the frequent descriptions of manors as *vasta*, ‘waste’, which are a characteristic feature of the Yorkshire *Domesday* they have claimed that they have found them. Some 44.5% of the vills mentioned in the Yorkshire DB are described as waste, more than double that for

¹⁸ Palliser, “Domesday Book and the ‘harrying of the North’”, 3.

¹⁹ Palliser, *op. cit.*, 20.

any other county.²⁰ Some historians, indeed, have gone so far as to suggest that it is possible to trace the movements of the Norman armies through the distribution of waste in *Domesday Book*.²¹ Others, unhappy with such a direct correlation, suggested that some of the wastage should be laid at the doors of the Scots and the Danes, both of whom raided the area on a number of occasions in the 1060s-1080s.²² T.A.M. Bishop, in an important article published in 1948, observed the disproportionate degree of wastage in unproductive upland areas and proposed that between 1070 and 1086 numbers of peasants had been forcibly removed to repopulate the better land of the Yorkshire plain.²³ This view, however, has won comparatively slight acceptance.

More recently, a number of problems with the whole approach of equating DB waste with devastated land have been highlighted. W.E. Wightman argued in 1975 that the estates described as 'waste' in the Yorkshire *Domesday* were described as such as an accounting device, showing only that the land was essentially worthless for administrative purposes.²⁴ This could be for any of a number of reasons: the attachment of one estate to another for administrative purposes, an absence of tenants or peasants prepared to work a particular estate or an estate's exemption from geld; the word waste itself should not be assumed to mean that that area had indeed been devastated and its inhabitants killed, although this can not be ruled out.²⁵ A number of commentators have suggested that the problems with *Domesday Book* already noted must compel strict caution to be exercised in attempting to use it as evidence for the devastation, whilst others have expressed incredulity that William had the time or manpower to wreak devastation on the scale attributed to him by the

²⁰ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 605, H.C. Darby and I.S. Maxwell, *The Domesday Geography of Northern England* (CUP: Cambridge, 1962), 59-61, 139, 212.

²¹ Beddoe and Rowe, "Ethnology of West Yorkshire", 50-1.

²² Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, 169 ff.

²³ T.A.M. Bishop, "The Norman settlement of Yorkshire", in R.W. Hunt, W.A. Pantin and R.W. Southern (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1948), 1-14.

²⁴ W.E. Wightman, "The significance of 'waste' in the Yorkshire Domesday", in *Northern History* 10 (1975), 55-71, passim, especially 70.

²⁵ *ibid.* See also Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship*, 25.

chroniclers.²⁶ Furthermore, the devastation does not seem to have been so total that it could prevent the re-appearance of local men in the records, or the continuity of place-names and boundaries even in those areas allegedly entirely wasted.²⁷ Nevertheless, the records of waste and the general drop in estate values across Yorkshire does suggest administrative disruption, perhaps on a quite extensive scale. The whole topic of waste is an important one, for it represents a version of the familiar continuity/discontinuity debate.

Thus, in the discussion of the various types of evidence for the Norman Conquest that follows, the special circumstances of Yorkshire will be borne closely in mind. The main principles of the discourse are the same as those at a national level: in Yorkshire, as elsewhere, the Conquest is conventionally characterised as an elite settlement, by comparatively small numbers of people, it is studied mainly on the basis of written evidence, and linguistic and archaeological data continue to have a minuscule role. However, in some ways it differs from the wider picture; it was a society only on the verge of incorporation into 'England' at 1066. The experience of conquest in Yorkshire was rather different from that of elsewhere, as is the evidence by which it is known.

Discussion

In this section it has been shown that the migration discourse built up around the Norman Conquest is of a substantially different character from those associated with the English and Danish settlements. Where study of the earlier migrations is largely based upon archaeological and linguistic evidence and concerned with establishing basic features such as the scale and character of population movement, that of the Norman Conquest is text-based and is entirely confident that the size and fundamental nature of the migration is already known. In many ways, for the Norman Conquest the 'problem of migration' does not exist. It is for this reason that it has been used as a control, an experiment where all the variables of size and character of migration are known, which can act as a comparison when

²⁶ DB: Palliser, "Domesday Book and the 'harrying of the North'"; William's armies: D. Hey, *Yorkshire from AD 1000* (Longmans: London and New York, 1986), 28, Dalton, *op. cit.*, 24.

²⁷ Palliser, "Domesday Book and the 'harrying of the North'", 20-1, Hey, *Yorkshire from AD 1000*, 28.

venturing into the murkier waters of population movement in the fifth-sixth and ninth-tenth centuries. The tacit assumption of this is that all early mediaeval migrations, by virtue of the fact that they *are* early mediaeval migrations, are intrinsically comparable. It is assumed that the impact of the various migrations on the record is a direct guide to their scale and significance, and that they will all affect different parts of the record in the same way. In the rest of this chapter, an attempt will be made to assess why the Norman Conquest makes its appearance in the written, linguistic and archaeological records in a way so different from the other migrations covered in this thesis. The intention is to determine if these differences represent dissimilarities in the size and scale of the migrations, or in the ways in which they had an impact upon the record. In this way, the usefulness and validity of direct comparisons of the migrations will be tested.

It would, furthermore, be mistaken to assume, merely because of the absence of a numbers debate, that the Norman Conquest is free from all of the problems of the traditional migration discourse. The Norman Conquest has its own versions of the normal nationalist questions. Above all other things the discourse has been concerned with the relative contributions of the Old English kingdom and the Norman conquerors to the development of High Mediaeval England; the question has always traditionally been formed in terms of these ethnic polarities. This, however, has led to problems in areas such as Yorkshire, whose integration into the English kingdom by 1066 was questionable, and where Norman rule represented as much the imposition of rule from the south as ‘foreign’ rule. Therefore, with this aim in mind, the nationalist and migrationist interpretation of the Conquest is re-assessed.

5.1 Written Evidence

Introduction

As we have seen, it is the existence of a large and varied written record that most of all marks out the Norman Conquest from the other migrations here considered. Both historical narratives and the various types of non-narrative record survive in relative abundance. By 1066 both ‘sides’, English and Norman, were Christian, literate, and had some sort of tradition of written expression. In the case of the English that tradition was very venerable, and had produced a number of works of history, from Bede onwards, although in the century or so prior to the Conquest the flow of these had dwindled somewhat. On the other hand, it is in the eleventh century that, in the various versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, it first becomes possible to view English history through the eyes of a number of authors with differing cultural and political standpoints.²⁸ The Conquest itself, although it indubitably caused some disruption and brought an end to the Old English vernacular written tradition, did not, by any means, interrupt the continuity of lettered scholarship, as the Anglo-Saxon and Viking incursions had done. Indeed, a direct response to the trauma of Conquest was an upsurge in historical writing, the renaissance associated with the ‘Anglo-Norman’ historians.²⁹ The late eleventh and early twelfth centuries saw a spate of narrative histories, both of the Anglo-Saxon period, and of the Conquest, as the literate English and Anglo-Normans sought to come to terms with the new challenges to their identity; “crisis-led” history, as Pauline Stafford has termed it.³⁰ Thus for Yorkshire, information on the events of the Conquest is furnished not only by the D and E manuscripts of the *Chronicle*, but also by Orderic Vitalis, ‘Florence of Worcester’, Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury and Symeon of Durham, to name only the most

²⁸ John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*, 171.

²⁹ P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: a political and social history of England in the tenth and eleventh centuries* (Edward Arnold: London, 1989), 20, Southern, “Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing”, 246-256.

³⁰ Stafford, *op. cit.*, 4.

important.³¹ Alone of the migrations considered here, the Norman Conquest increased rather than destroyed the narrative materials by which its history might be written.

Besides the purely narrative record, however, the Conquest period is a very significant epoch in the development of usage of documents in administration, law and everyday life. England at this time was in the early stages of the transition 'from memory to written record', that is to say, from a situation where literate ways of thinking and doing business were the exception to one where they were the norm.³² From this time onwards, documents would come to have an increasingly large role in all transactions, and particularly in the complicated business of land holding and tenurial status. The Conquest itself undoubtedly had a role in this transition, but it is by no means easy to fathom its precise nature. It is certainly not a matter of a simple transference of a Continental document-using habit to an England that had not previously known it; indeed it seems likely that written records were used more frequently in the administration of Late Saxon England than in pre-Conquest Normandy, and that Norman administrators learnt their usefulness through contact with the English.³³ There is disagreement on the precise extent and uses of literacy in the late Old English state.³⁴ What is more broadly accepted is that the Norman Conquest coincided with and directly affected a new and significant phase in the development of lettered ways of doing things.³⁵ Firstly, by bringing about the replacement of Old English by Latin as the language of choice for royal administration, it brought England into the full flow of continental literate activity. Secondly, the great break in continuity of land ownership that

³¹ Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship*, 14.

³² M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (2nd edn.)(Blackwell: Oxford, 1993), 1.

³³ *op. cit.*, 26-7.

³⁴ Enthusiasts for Anglo-Saxon government, such as James Campbell, assert that the relatively tiny number of surviving pre-Conquest administrative documents represents only a minuscule fraction of those that had existed, the rest having been destroyed either because they were never intended to be of more than short-term use, or because they were in English, and disregarded by the Normans, who preferred Latin (J. Campbell, "Observations on English government from the tenth to the twelfth century", in *TRHS* Fifth Series, 25 (1975), 39-54, 41-2. See also S. Harvey, "Domesday Book and its predecessors", in *EHR*, 86 (1971), 753-73. Contra this, see Clanchy, *op. cit.*, 31-2.

³⁵ Clanchy, *op. cit.*, 25.

occurred with the post-Conquest dispossession of the English aristocracy occasioned changes in the nature of land tenures, and started to generate increasing numbers of documents.³⁶ The move towards increasing use of documents with regard to landholding, was, almost certainly, one that was occurring in England (and elsewhere) in any case, but the break in continuity at the Conquest allowed it to develop more rapidly and consistently across England. At any rate the landtaking after the Conquest was the first time that such post-migratory dispossession had been declared in writing. *Domesday Book* was the ultimate statement of this way of thinking; it seems to have been intended to give a stamp of permanence to the Norman take-over of England.³⁷

Thus, in the Norman Conquest, we have a migration which not only took place in the context of a more developed written record, but which itself made a positive contribution to the development of lettered habits of mind and business. It does not merely benefit from the happy accident of a full surviving written record, but itself created the conditions and the demand for that written record.

Narrative Evidence

With such a large number of near-contemporary narrative sources, historians have generally felt very confident in their ability to describe the quite complex events of the Conquest and settlement in the North.³⁸ Every historian from Freeman onwards has hung their interpretation of the settlement upon a framework drawn from the various chroniclers. They are the starting-point for all enquiry, and it is essentially their agenda that is being followed in the belief that the Conquest should have visible effects at all.

However, the narrative sources, for all that they are far more substantial evidence than their equivalents for the other migrations, yield precious little explicit information on the extent and character of settlement. Their interests are far more court- and personality-centred. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the narrative sources do not convey any feeling

³⁶ M. Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England, 1066-1166* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1986), 110.

³⁷ Clanchy, *op. cit.*, 34.

³⁸ Palliser, "Domesday Book and the 'harrying of the North'", 2-3.

that the colonization of Yorkshire involved the movement of more than a small and socially-elevated group. For the finer details of the settlement, however, it is necessary to turn to the non-narrative evidence, and in particular to *Domesday Book*.

Non-narrative evidence

It is in the profusion of administrative documents from the eleventh century and later that study of the effects of the Norman Conquest really remains grounded. The relationship of the narrative sources with the non-narrative is particularly interesting, for, just as the archaeological record was used to fill the gaps in the written accounts of the English settlements, and the toponymic and linguistic evidence mustered for a similar purpose for the Danes, so the non-narrative written evidence was used to flesh out the bones of the narrative accounts of the Norman Conquest. *DB* evidence was called upon to answer the questions imposed by the narrative framework; the extent of the damage caused by the harrying, the nature of changes made to land tenure, even, to a limited extent, to answer questions about numbers, and on the means by which Norman dominance was achieved.³⁹

For Yorkshire, charter evidence is rather thin for the pre-Conquest and immediately post-Conquest period, perhaps not surprisingly given the area's instability, and the invasions by Norwegians, Normans, Scots and Danes. It becomes very full from the twelfth century onwards.⁴⁰ For the historian of the settlement though, a far more serious problem than the difficulties with the charters is the inadequacy of the Yorkshire *DB*, which has been called “the least informative and useful of all the county Domesdays”.⁴¹ Frequent changes in style, diplomatic and the very conception of the work itself in the course of the Yorkshire text have suggested that it was the first of the county volumes to be compiled, and that the Exchequer scribe only settled down to a standardised approach during its composition.⁴² Unfortunately these problems make the text extremely difficult to use, and particularly hard

³⁹ Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship*, 19-20, Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, 50 ff.

⁴⁰ Dalton, *op. cit.*, 13.

⁴¹ Roffe, “Domesday Book and northern society”, 313.

⁴² Roffe, *op.cit.*, 323.

to compare with those of other counties. It may well be that many of the peculiarities of the Yorkshire economy as depicted in *DB*, including the large areas of waste commonly taken as evidence of the harrying, are products of the recording process and not representative of the true state of affairs.⁴³

The evidence for the replacement of the Anglo-Scandinavian aristocracy by Normans, on the other hand, is unambiguous. Of some 30 tenants-in-chief listed in *DB*, only one of them, Cospatric, bears an English name, whereas before the Conquest the land had been held by a rather larger number of Anglo-Scandinavian thegns, with no Normans whatsoever amongst them.⁴⁴ There are also a number of Frenchmen listed amongst the 1086 sub-tenants, although it seems clear that at this level of society the revolution in landholding was not so complete, and that there were many Englishmen remaining or newly installed, some of whom may merely have swapped an English master for a French one.⁴⁵ To add to the rural colonization, there seems also to have been a colony of Norman merchants in the city of York; Normans certainly held 145 of the messuages of the city at 1086.⁴⁶

Discussion

It is undoubtedly possible, on the strength of the written evidence, to construct a relatively full picture of the scale and character of the Norman settlement of Yorkshire, as in the rest of England. Even though the area's written record indubitably poses many problems of interpretation, there seems no reason to doubt that the traditional picture of an elite settlement is, in all essentials, correct. What is more methodologically interesting is that the extensive non-narrative record stands in a similar relationship to the narrative histories as does archaeological and linguistic evidence in the other migration discourses;

⁴³ D.M. Palliser, "An introduction to the Yorkshire Domesday", in Williams and Martin (eds.), *Yorkshire Domesday*, 1-38, 35-8.

⁴⁴ J. Le Patourel, "The Norman Conquest of Yorkshire", in *Northern History* 6 (1971), 1-21, 9-12. It is possible, however, that some of the pre-Conquest thegns may actually have been sub-tenants of greater English lords. See Palliser, *op. cit.*, 30.

⁴⁵ Palliser, *op. cit.*, 33, Le Patourel, *op. cit.*, 13, W.E. Wightman, *The Lacy Family in England and Normandy, 1066-1194* (OUP: Oxford, 1966), 40-1.

⁴⁶ *DB* 1, 298a, Le Patourel, "Norman Conquest of Yorkshire", 14.

it is called upon to flesh out the narrative bones and answer the questions the narrative evidence poses; the extent of waste, or the numbers of French entering the county. That it is seemingly able to do so is indicative of at least the beginnings of a re-orientation of the actions and perceptions of society along literate lines that amounts to a transformation.

5.2 Linguistic Evidence

Introduction

Linguists, like archaeologists, have seldom tried to recruit their evidence to determining the nature of the Conquest; they too have felt it unnecessary in a period so well-evidenced, and have turned their considerable attentions instead to the more strictly linguistic questions of the nature of French influence upon the English language.⁴⁷ Indeed argument on some aspects of the linguistic evidence for the Norman Conquest has tended to flow in precisely the opposite direction. The case has been put, most cogently by Margaret Gelling, that a, if not the, main purpose of linguistic and particularly toponymic study of the Norman Conquest is “as a control in attempts to estimate from place-name evidence the nature of earlier conquests/invasions/infiltrations, for which we do not have comparable historical documentation.”⁴⁸ It is her contention that the few post-Conquest French and French-influenced place-names “affords sound evidence for the effect on place-names of the advent of a foreign aristocracy unaccompanied by a body of peasant settlers.”⁴⁹

Certainly, there is no shortage of evidence for language study in this period. Place names are recorded in abundance in *Domesday Book* and Charter evidence, as are some personal names, although these are clearly biased towards the upper reaches of society. This is a problem with all of our evidence for personal names, of course, but, with the evidence from church records, moneyers' names and other sources, this evidence is quite comprehensive, especially for particular specialised groups and statuses. For the language itself, the record is slightly more problematical; the Conquest effectively destroyed the Old English written standard and replaced it with Latin. Documents in English are rare until at least 1200. There is a slightly larger stock of Anglo-Norman documents surviving, but the

⁴⁷ Jespersen, *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, 83.

⁴⁸ M. Gelling, “The evidence of place-names I”, in P.H. Sawyer (ed.) *English Medieval Settlement* (Edward Arnold: London, 1979), 110-121, 110.

⁴⁹ Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, 236. For a reasoned critique of this stance, see Stafford, *The East Midlands in the Early Middle Ages*, 77-8.

spoken languages remain shrouded in obscurity, lightened only by occasional comments by chroniclers on the linguistic abilities of their subjects.⁵⁰

Spoken and Written Language

French influence on the English language is, of course, massive. It is, moreover, extremely easily available for study, and the combination of these factors has long made it a subject for research and discussion.⁵¹ Unlike the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian language change, which can only be studied by extrapolating back from later examples of the language, it is possible to search documents in English (although they are, admittedly, few) for evidence of French influence throughout almost the whole post-Conquest period. This has established beyond doubt that the influx of French words and forms was at its height in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries rather than the twelfth.⁵² This can perhaps be associated with a trend towards the general usage of English by the upper classes - those accustomed to expressing themselves in French bringing a portion of it to their adopted language - but must also be seen in the context of the high status of French as a courtly language, and the influx of French speakers during the reign of Henry III (1216-1272).⁵³ At any rate, it is apparent that the deep influence of French upon English is a product not solely of the Norman Conquest, and of the settlement of a French-speaking section of the population, but of a number of other historical factors. Consequently few attempts have been made to relate the linguistic evidence with the nature of the conquest; neither extrapolating its nature from its effects upon the language, nor attempting to claim that an

⁵⁰ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 119-120.

⁵¹ Jespersen, *op. cit.*, 83.

⁵² Jespersen, *op. cit.*, 92, Sawyer, *Roman Britain to Norman England*, 255, Baugh and Cable, *History of the English Language*, 134.

⁵³ Baugh and Cable, *op. cit.*, 129-134, A. Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Boydell: Woodbridge, 1995), 218-9.

aristocratic settlement would cause the observed effects.⁵⁴

Although linguistic evidence has not been used to throw light upon the nature of the settlement, there can be little doubt that it has been deeply influenced by historical (as opposed to linguistic) considerations in terms of the influence of a numbers argument on interpretations of the relative positions of French and English in post-Conquest England. The central work dealing with this question, Johan Vising's *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature* of 1923, operated around a belief in a migration into England of some 200 000 Frenchmen during the Conqueror's reign alone, and of a reduction in numbers of the English population by war, famine and flight by about a quarter from a maximum of two million before the Conquest.⁵⁵ These utterly mythical figures were derived from Geoffrey Hill, and in turn from the guesses of E.S. Creasy's *The Rise and Progress of the English Constitution* in 1853; they had little or no justification in evidence.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, they were an essential part of Vising's thesis that the English language had practically disappeared from all but the lowest ranks of society in the twelfth century (a typical numbers argument of the sort familiar from the Anglo-Saxon and Viking settlements), and they benefited from the general acceptance of his works amongst linguists as the most important authority on Anglo-Norman. As such, they influenced not only discussion of the language itself up to the 1980's and beyond, but also Zachrisson's seminal work on the Anglo-Norman influence upon place-names.⁵⁷ It is only with sustained criticism from R.M. Wilson, W. Rothwell and R.

⁵⁴ One should, however, note Jespersen's attempt to show the status of French as an aristocratic language by demonstrating the French origin of many English words associated with the aristocracy and élite living: Jespersen, *op. cit.*, 84 ff.

⁵⁵ J. Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature* (OUP: London, 1923), 9.

⁵⁶ G. Hill, *Some Consequences of the Norman Conquest* (London, 1904), 24, E.S. Creasy, *The Rise and Progress of the English Constitution* (Richard Bentley: London, 1853), 70-1. See Sawyer's dismissive comment in *Roman Britain to Norman England*, 253.

⁵⁷ R.W. Chambers, *On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School*, Early English Text Society OS 186 (Early English Text Society: London, 1932), M. Dominica Legge, "Anglo-Norman and the Historian", in *History* 26 (1941), R. Berndt, "The linguistic situation in England from the Norman Conquest to the loss of Normandy (1066-1204)", in *Philologica Pragensia* 8 (1965), 145-63, R.E. Zachrisson, "The French Element", in A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton (eds.) *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names*, 93-114, 96. For comment on Zachrisson and Vising, see C. Clark, "Towards a reassessment of 'Anglo-Norman influence on English place-names'", in Ureland and

Berndt that Vising's thesis has been rejected in favour of one more in accordance with historians' ideas of an élite conquest.⁵⁸ This sees Anglo-Norman as the language of a small but highly influential aristocratic minority; it never threatened to replace English, and, even before the loss of Normandy in 1204, it was losing its status as a true vernacular and was increasingly coming to be an artificial (and learnt) language of culture.⁵⁹ On the other hand, French remained a mark of social distinction, and its acquisition was essential for those seeking to gain entrance to the upper classes. This undoubtedly encouraged considerable bilingualism, and thus it seems likely that by the thirteenth century, there will have been a small aristocratic minority that spoke only French, a large majority of the population speaking only English and a fairly sizable bilingual group.⁶⁰ This view has won considerable support from mainstream historians.⁶¹

Place-Names

It is perhaps with regard to place-names that the most controversial work on the post-Norman linguistic situation has been done, for it is by using toponymic evidence that Margaret Gelling has claimed that it is possible to use the Norman Conquest as a 'control' for the other migrations.⁶² The toponymic effects of the Norman Conquest were extremely

Broderick (eds.), *Language Contact in the British Isles*, 275-95, repr. in P. Jackson (ed.) *Words, Names and History: Selected Writings of Cecily Clark* (D.S. Brewer: Cambridge, 1995), 144-155, 144.

⁵⁸ R.M. Wilson, "English and French in England: 1100-1300", in *History* 28 (1943), 37-60, R. Berndt, "The linguistic situation in England...", 145-147, W. Rothwell, "The teaching of French in medieval England", in *Modern Language Review* 63 (1968), 37-46, *idem.*, "The role of French in 13th-c. England", in *Bull. of the John Rylands Library* 58 (1976), 445-466, *idem.*, "A quelle époque a-t-on cessé de parler français en Angleterre?", in *Mélanges de philologie romane offerts à Charles Camproux* (Montpellier: Université de Paul-Valéry, 1979), 1075-1089. See also Ian Short's brief review and bibliography of this debate in "On bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England", in *Romance Philology* 33 (1980), 467-79, 467-8 and n.3.

⁵⁹ Short, *op. cit.*, 468.

⁶⁰ Baugh and Cable, *History of the English Language*, 124.

⁶¹ Clark, "Anglo-Norman influence on English place-names", 146, Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 151-4, M. Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England*, 211-214.

⁶² Gelling, "The evidence of place-names I", 110.

slight compared with the English or Danish settlements; indeed the English Place Name Society did not even bother to list French-derived place-names until vol. 10 of its survey series.⁶³ The dominating influence in their interpretation remains that of R.E. Zachrisson, in two essays published in 1909 and 1924.⁶⁴ He notes that the number of French place-names is very small throughout the country, with only a handful in each county. New Norman strongholds tended to bear French names, as, for example, in Richmond, Yorks. or Pontefract. Yorkshire also gained a number of French-derived place-names from the many ecclesiastical foundations such as Rievaulx or Fountains. Otherwise French coinages tended to be stereotyped, often in complement with Bel- or Beau-, the equivalent of modern house-names, deliberately chosen to embellish a castle or manor house.⁶⁵ To these can be added a very small number of names which seem to suggest a more organic origin, such as Tilts ('lime-trees') in the West Riding; these are slightly more common in the North, but remain exceedingly rare everywhere.⁶⁶ The major impact of the Conquest upon place-names, argued Zachrisson, was phonological, the mangling of *Snotingeham* to produce Nottingham, or the substitution of *Dure(s)me* for *Dunelm*, Durham.⁶⁷ This he saw as the result of massive language change and substantial population influx on the scale proposed by Vising; it is interesting that he accepted a hypothesis of substantial settlement whilst recognizing the small number of French place-names.⁶⁸

With the widespread acceptance by linguists of a minimalist, élite-led interpretation of the Norman settlement, it became possible for Margaret Gelling to put forward her proposition that the Norman Conquest be used as a control for the sort of effects upon

⁶³ Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, 236.

⁶⁴ R.E. Zachrisson, *A Contribution to the Study of Anglo-Norman Influence on English Place-Names*, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, NFI, iv, 3 (Lund, 1909), "The French element", in Mawer and Stenton (eds.), *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names* Vol. 1, 93-114.

⁶⁵ Zachrisson, "French element", 93, Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, 237.

⁶⁶ Gelling, *op. cit.*, 238.

⁶⁷ Zachrisson, "French element", 97.

⁶⁸ *op. cit.*, 96 and n. 1. For a critique of Zachrisson's views on phonological changes based on more modern views of the post-Conquest relations of French and English, see Clark, "Anglo-Norman influence on English place-names".

place-names that might be expected of an aristocratic settlement.⁶⁹ This argument, however, has been strongly criticised; it has been pointed out that there are many other variables involved. Most importantly, the development of written records, which (as discussed in 5.0) was ongoing at this time, seems to have been one of the decisive influences in fixing and making permanent place-names; those given in *DB* or the documents which preceded and followed it, which are mostly of English or Anglo-Scandinavian origin, may have survived precisely because they were so recorded. Furthermore, the fluidity of place-names seems to have been related to the stability or otherwise of landholding systems; where these were in rapid change, as in Yorkshire in the 10th century (see above, chapter 4), the re-naming of places seems to have proceeded more easily than in those periods which saw more stability in the nature of landholding. The overwhelming continuity of Yorkshire place-names throughout the Conquest period can only add weight to the arguments of those who seek to minimise the disruptive effects of William's 'harrying'.⁷⁰

Personal Names

One of the most striking consequences of the Conquest, obvious even today, is the almost-complete replacement of the English and Anglo-Scandinavian personal naming stock throughout England by anthroponyms of Continental origin. The effect is visible soon after the Conquest, and at all levels of society; by the middle of the thirteenth century it is complete.⁷¹ Evidence for most strata of society, with the significant exception of the lower ranks of the peasantry, exists in charters, estate surveys and legal documents in some quantity from the two centuries after the Conquest, yet until very recently there was, surprisingly, little study of the process, and certainly no attempts to learn about the character and nature of the settlement on this basis.⁷² This is in marked contrast to the considerable

⁶⁹ Gelling, "Evidence of Place-Names I", 110, *Signposts to the Past*, 23.

⁷⁰ D. Hey, *Yorkshire From AD 1000*, (Longman: London and New York, 1986) 28.

⁷¹ C. Clark, "*Willelmus rex? vel alius Willelmus?*", in *Nomina* 11 (1987), 7-33, repr. in Jackson (ed.) *Words, Names and History*, 280-298, 280-1.

⁷² Clark, "*Willelmus rex?*", 280. See, however, P.H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (London, 1958), xix-xx, E. Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names* (Lund, 1947).

research devoted to the Scandinavian-derived personal names since 1900.⁷³

There are profound differences between the effects of the Norman and Scandinavian conquests on English personal nomenclature. The Danes introduced a large stock of names, both male and female, and an active tradition of new name formation that meant that, of the many Anglo-Scandinavian names of the Danelaw by the eleventh century, a significant number had been formed in England and were exclusive to there.⁷⁴ The Norse-derived names were grafted onto the existing stock of English names, leading to the creation of a large and distinctive insular nomenclature. By contrast, the Continental names introduced in the late eleventh century were comparatively few in number (each therefore seeing proportionately greater use) and far more stable in character; there were few innovations on the standard Williams, Roberts, Richards, Ralphs and John. Moreover, they were not added to a continuing Anglo-Scandinavian stock of names, but entirely replaced it. The relative paucity of names has been interpreted as indicating a comparatively small number of models from which continental names could be borrowed (and thus once again confirming the impression of an elite-level settlement) but the reasons why pre-conquest insular names were abandoned and Continental names taken up so exclusively, and the localised sources for the chosen names remain uncertain and require further research.⁷⁵ What is certain is that “the onomastic revolution after the Norman Conquest cannot be used as a measure of the scale of French immigration, or of the scale and intensity of other forms of French influence.”⁷⁶

Some light on the character of the Conquest can be thrown by study of women's names. These are markedly slower to change to Continental forms than are men's, and it has been suggested that this is because of a scarcity of women's names to serve as models,

⁷³ e.g. Björkman, *Nordische Personennamen in England*, *idem.*, *Zur englischen Namenkunde*, Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire*.

⁷⁴ Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England*, 257, Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names*, lxiv.

⁷⁵ Clark, “*Willelmus rex?*”, 291.

⁷⁶ Sawyer, *Roman Britain to Norman England*, 257.

implying that comparatively few Norman women were involved in the settlement.⁷⁷ This would seem to suggest that a few sparse references to mixed marriages between Normans and English do not reveal clearly what may have been a relatively common occurrence.⁷⁸ If so, the implications for cultural mixing, the relative post-Conquest status of English and French, and the nature of the settlement are obviously profound.

Discussion

The linguistic and onomastic record for England during the Norman Conquest is very rich and offers opportunities for research into the processes of settlement and acculturation unmatched by its equivalents for the Anglo-Saxon and Viking settlements. That for Yorkshire is, on the whole, reasonable, and seems to show no ill effects from the harrying; indeed it may be able to shed some light upon the special character of the Conquest in the north. That being said, there are a number of comments that can be passed on the ways in which the linguistic evidence has been interpreted, and its usage as a source of comparison for other migratory episodes.

The enduring influence of Creasy's wild estimate for the Norman settlers upon the interpretation of the evidence for language per se (as opposed to onomastic evidence) is a remarkable illustration of the dangers both of too close an adherence to the notion that numbers are directly proportional to influence, and of a breakdown in interdisciplinary communication. Whereas, for most historians in the twentieth century, the question of numbers has rarely been an issue, for linguistic discussion it continued to be significant and at question at least into the 1980s. Nevertheless, there has been a widespread recognition from the earliest period of study of the Conquest's linguistic effects that it is necessary to understand the historical context in which most French words were taken into English in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and unwise simply to relate the number and character of French loan-words and influence to the extent of settlement during the Conqueror's reign.

⁷⁷ C. Clark, "Women's names in post-Conquest England: Observations and speculations", in *Speculum* 53 (1978), 223-51, repr. in Jackson (ed.) *Words, Names and History*, 117-143.

⁷⁸ Clark, "Women's names", passim. Williams, *English and the Norman Conquest*, 199.

This is, perhaps, a lesson which might have been learnt with profit by scholars using far inferior records in interpretation of Scandinavian effects upon English.

5.3 Archaeological Evidence

In Yorkshire, as in England as a whole, there is no systematic study of ‘the archaeology of the Norman Conquest’. This does not, of course, represent any lacking in availability of material from the period; indeed, both in the city of York itself, and in a rural context, at Wharram Percy, extensive excavation has produced ample material from the eleventh-thirteenth centuries.⁷⁹ It indicates more that archaeological research agenda have not been directed towards illumination of the circumstances and consequences of the Conquest and settlement (see above, section 5.0). There have been no attempts by archaeologists specifically to assess the archaeological evidence for Norman settlement in any area of England, nor does archaeology receive anything but the scantest possible attention in textbook studies of the Conquest. On the rare occasions when material culture is mentioned, it normally occurs only in rapid summaries of the effects of the Normans on ecclesiastical and military architecture.⁸⁰ The only exception to this is that of the castles, the study of which has made a significant contribution to understanding of the development of Norman authority in Yorkshire, although even this evidence plays very much a secondary role to that of documents.⁸¹ There has been, however, no attempt to determine whether, and how, material culture was employed to re-enforce (or undermine) Norman political dominance, either in Yorkshire or England as a whole.

This, as we have seen, is partly a result of the greater confidence felt in written records of the Conquest, but it is also due to the nature of the archaeological record itself, which has never lent itself to interpretations positing striking cultural confrontations, as, for instance,

⁷⁹ Hall, *The Viking Dig*, Beresford and Hurst, *Wharram Percy: Deserted Medieval Village*.

⁸⁰ See, for instance, D. Walker, *The Normans in Britain* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1995), 116-145, Sawyer, *Roman Britain to Norman England*, 259-60, M. Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England*, 216-218.

⁸¹ Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship*, 31-77, esp. 31-2, M.L. Faull and S.A. Moorhouse (eds.) *West Yorkshire: An Archaeological Survey to AD 1500* (3 vols.)(West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council: Wakefield, 1981), III, N.J.G. Pounds, *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: A Social and Political History* (CUP: Cambridge, 1991), Hey, *Yorkshire From AD 1000*, 29-39.

has that of the Anglo-Saxon settlements. There seem to have been very many similarities in the material culture of pre-Conquest Normandy and England, making it difficult to claim particular aspects of the post-Conquest repertoire as in any sense ethnically diagnostic. In terms of burial customs, for instance, there was no discernible difference between English and Normans, both favouring unaccompanied E-W burial in churchyards, nor can any change be perceived in the post-Conquest period. In dress and personal ornamentation too, English and Norman fashions seem to have been identical, although the long hair of Englishmen is remarked upon by William of Poitiers, and the difference is clearly discernible on the Bayeux tapestry.⁸² In archaeologically visible respects, however, the Conquest has no effect upon dress. Another type of material culture frequently cited in the other migration episodes, pottery, shows general continuity from c. 850-1150. In Yorkshire, this generally meant locally-produced wares, with production probably centred at York.⁸³ The Norman Conquest, according to Hurst, had “no impact at all” upon these industries.⁸⁴

The archaeology of the landscape in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries suggests a more dynamic picture, but unfortunately it is extremely difficult to relate changes to the Norman settlement (or indeed any other datable event) with conviction. In Yorkshire, as in the rest of England, from the ninth century onwards there was a gradual trend away from the ancient settlement patterns of dispersed farms and hamlets towards the ‘typical’ medieval pattern of nucleated villages and open fields, but this seems to have proceeded very unevenly and patchily, and in some areas did not occur until the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, if at all. It has been suggested that the largish number of regularly-planned Yorkshire villages might represent Norman re-planning and re-organisation of the countryside after the ‘harrying’, but the dating of this is dubious at best, and they may well represent Anglo-Scandinavian

⁸² William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi* (ed. R. Foreville) (Paris, 1952), 260-1, G. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1986), 149-73, B.S.J. Isserlin, “Invasions and cultural change”, 11, Williams, *English and the Norman Conquest*, 189-90.

⁸³ J.G. Hurst, “The pottery”, in Wilson (ed.) *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, 283-348, 328-331, D. Austin, “The archaeology of the Domesday vill”, in A. Williams and R.W.H. Erskine (general eds.) *Domesday Book: Studies* (Alecto: London, 1987), 48-55, 49.

⁸⁴ Hurst, *op. cit.*, 343.

reorganisation or any of a host of other processes.⁸⁵ There is a clear danger of the Norman Conquest being used as “a convenient peg for a process in need of a cause”, concealing a diversity of causes for settlement nucleation in the central medieval period.⁸⁶

No changes in the typical rural or urban building types can be readily associated with the Conquest, but it does mark a major change in buildings of high status, both secular and ecclesiastical. Throughout England the years after the Conquest saw the rapid construction of a large number of castles; they were the means “whereby the Norman Conquest, and more particularly the Norman settlement, were carried out and rendered permanent.”⁸⁷ In their forms, they owe nothing to English models - the English aristocracy lived in fortified manor houses - and were based upon Norman exemplars at Fécamp, Caen, Falaise and Rouen.⁸⁸ Their extensive use in England, however, was a product of the circumstances of the Conquest, and of the need to impose and maintain Norman military and administrative control amidst the violence, tenurial insecurity and brigandage that it had unleashed.⁸⁹ In Yorkshire they are numerous with some playing an important role in defending access through the Pennines.⁹⁰ Of particular interest are the ‘castellanies’ – Dreu de la Beuvrière's Holderness, Alan of Brittany's Richmond, Ilbert de Lacy's Pontefract and William de Warenne's Conisborough – , extensive but compact lordships with a castle at their centre, probably intended both as defences in a vulnerable border zone, and as active instruments

⁸⁵ J. Sheppard, “Pre-enclosure field and settlement patterns in an English township”, in *Geografiska Annaler* 48 ser. B (1966), 59-77, *idem.*, “Metrological analysis of regular village plans in Yorkshire”, in *Agric. Hist. Rev.* 22 (1974), 118-35. On a Viking-period reorganisation see M. Harvey, “Open field structure and landholding arrangements in eastern Yorkshire”, in *Institute of British Geographers, Transactions* n.s. 9 (1984), 60-74. See also D. Austin, “Archaeology of the Domesday vill”, 51.

⁸⁶ Palliser, “Domesday Book and the ‘harrying of the North’”, 7.

⁸⁷ R. Allen Brown, “The castles of the Conquest”, in Williams and Erskine (eds.) *Domesday Book: Studies*, 69-74, 69.

⁸⁸ A. Williams, “A bell-house and a *burhgeat*: lordly residences in England before the Norman Conquest”, in *Medieval Knighthood* 4 (1992), 221-40, *English and the Norman Conquest*, 187, Walker, *Normans in Britain*, 118.

⁸⁹ C. Platt, *Medieval England: A Social History and Archaeology From the Conquest to 1600 AD* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1978), 2.

⁹⁰ Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship*, 78.

of Norman colonization in their marches.⁹¹ In the castles, and the settlements that frequently sprang up alongside them, is potent evidence of the material means by which Norman dominance was enforced; the castle has been described as “the perfect instrument of conquest, colonization, and settlement by a small, alien and military ruling class, which is the sociological pattern of the Norman Conquest.”⁹²

Paralleling, and, indeed, exceeding the castle-building of the Norman secular aristocracy was a massive investment in buildings by the post-Conquest church.⁹³ To some extent this had been prefigured by Edward the Confessor's building of Westminster Abbey in the Norman style, but for the most part English architecture seems to have been insular and backward (although the paucity of surviving greater Anglo-Saxon churches must render this a slightly hesitant judgement).⁹⁴ The Norman Conquest was undoubtedly responsible for the replacement of all of the old Anglo-Saxon cathedrals and greater churches by buildings more in keeping with Continental Romanesque fashion before the end of the century. In Yorkshire, rebuilding of churches such as the ruined York Minster (rebuilt in Romanesque style by 1100) was matched by Norman foundation and re-foundation of monasteries, which led to an effective rebirth of northern monasticism, with houses such as Selby, Lastingham, Whitby and St. Mary's, York, and in the first half of the twelfth century, the great Cistercian foundations at Rievaulx and Fountains (both of 1132).⁹⁵ In sum, large numbers of ecclesiastical buildings were constructed in a new style within a few years of the Conquest, and the path was laid for a far greater receptiveness to Continental architectural innovations thereafter. This too it seems reasonable to attribute to the Conquest.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Le Patourel, “Norman Conquest of Yorkshire”, 14-15, Hey, *Yorkshire From AD 1000*, 31, Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship*, 75-77.

⁹² Brown, “Castles”, 70.

⁹³ Platt, *Medieval England*, 17.

⁹⁴ Platt, *op. cit.*, 17, P. Kidson, “The Anglo-Saxon period”, in P. Kidson, P. Murray and P. Thompson, *A History of English Architecture* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1965), 13-32, 31, “Norman church architecture”, in Kidson et al., *op. cit.*, 33-63, 33.

⁹⁵ Hey, *Yorkshire From AD 1000*, 53-61.

⁹⁶ Isserlin, “Invasions and cultural change”, 12.

To conclude, archaeological evidence has seldom been used to judge the effects of the Conquest, in some ways for good reasons. The record is entirely consonant with the impression of domination by a relatively small number of high-status individuals, who swept away the previous aristocracy, but made little, if any, impression on the peasant bulk of the population. The major classes of archaeological evidence that do exist; the castles and churches, have been used not to demonstrate the size and character of the settlement, but to illustrate the military and administrative means by which the Normans dominated and re-organized their new-won territories (the castles), or the contempt in which they held pre-existing cultural achievement (the churches). Looked at in another light, it is not hard to argue that the archaeology of the Norman Conquest demonstrates exactly what might be expected of a high-status settlement.

5.4 Discussion

In the introduction to this chapter it was suggested that, thanks to the existence of a large written record, study of the Norman Conquest has taken a rather different form from that on the other English migration episodes. The rest of the chapter has illustrated the effect of differing evidence, methods and questions on ideas about the Norman settlement of Yorkshire. In one important way, however, the Norman settlement debate followed a trajectory similar to that of the other migration discourses.

It too passed through a phase, roughly between the late sixteenth century and the late nineteenth century, during which historians were concerned above all with establishing the course of political and military events, and with constitutional questions, in particular the idea of the ‘Norman Yoke’.⁹⁷ Evidence during this lengthy period came almost entirely from written documents; the narrative histories of the twelfth-century chroniclers yielded a basic outline of events, and *Domesday Book* was used to illustrate the dispossession of the English and the changes that had come about with the Conquest.⁹⁸ In the course of this lengthy period, the convention became entrenched in historical writing that the Anglo-Saxons should be treated as ‘us’, the ancestors of the English people as they were known in the present, whereas the Normans were irredeemably ‘them’, hostile aliens who had oppressed the English, but whose ultimate contribution to the racial stock of the nation was negligible.⁹⁹ This identification was the product both of the survival of the English identity in the post-Conquest centuries (or even simply of the name ‘English’ for the inhabitants of that part of lowland Britain), and of the specifically seventeenth and eighteenth-century discussion on the topic of the Norman Yoke.¹⁰⁰ Its influence was lasting, arguably affecting academic

⁹⁷ Douglas, *The Norman Conquest and British Historians*, 6-22.

⁹⁸ Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 114-140, esp. 122-5.

⁹⁹ Brown, *The Normans and the Norman Conquest*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ On the post-Conquest survival of the English identity, see Wormald, *Engla Lond*, 16-18, J. Gillingham, “The context and purposes of the *History of the Kings of Britain*”, in *Anglo-Norman Studies* 13 (1990), 106-9, *idem.*, “Conquering the barbarians: war and chivalry in twelfth-century Britain”, in *Haskins Society Journal* 4 (1992), Williams, *English and the Norman Conquest*, particularly chapter seven.

conceptions of the Conquest well into the twentieth century, and popular ideas up to the present day. As racist interpretations of early medieval English history became increasingly important and popular in the nineteenth century, it is noticeable that the Normans were, with some exceptions, not perceived as racially significant. Instead, nationalist histories such as Freeman's portrayed their role as merely culturally transformative; their numbers, if not actually to be patriotically minimised, were insignificant.

Just like the other migration discourses, that on the Norman Conquest went through a period of elaboration in the later nineteenth century, as new methods and priorities emerged, which led to a distinctly different and new type of study from the 1890s onwards. This was based, to a large extent, upon more systematic study of *Domesday Book* (interest had been growing in the work since the publication of the photozincographed facsimile of 1862 and the octocentennial celebrations in 1886).¹⁰¹ Unlike the other migration discourses, however, this period of intensification of study did not see any large-scale attempts to incorporate archaeological and linguistic evidence into the discourse. No need was felt to use these types of evidence to ascertain the character of the settlement. Methodologically at least, therefore, this period sees a parting of the ways for study of the Norman Conquest from the other migration discourses. Interdisciplinary communication remained relatively poor. By an unhappy accident, when it did occur, it inspired the absurdly high figure for Norman settlement accepted by Johan Vising in his account of the linguistic effects of the Conquest, and, under his aegis, parroted unquestioningly by generations of linguists thereafter.

Mid-twentieth-century study was concerned not so much with the constitutional issues and political history which had been the mainstays of previous study, but instead occupied itself with institutional, social and economic concerns, and above all, the origins of English feudalism. The emphasis was upon deciding where to look for the origins of the high medieval English state; late Saxon England or Normandy? Issues of continuity were all-important; it was, for instance, in this atmosphere that the question of wastage in Yorkshire came to be aired with increasing regularity.

¹⁰¹ Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 154-161.

The past thirty years have seen new directions in the Norman Conquest migration discourse. One is essentially outward-looking; in response to the challenges to the traditional maximalist interpretations of the Anglo-Saxon and Viking settlements, the Norman Conquest has, rather unwisely, been held up as a model for the sorts of changes which should be expected in various aspects of the record in the event of a settlement by a small élite. This is a view which has been savaged by various authors on the grounds that it ignores the many other factors involved in the creation of the record, and implies that eleventh and twelfth century England are basically comparable with the country in the early medieval period proper. The other development in study of the Norman Conquest has been a recognition of the problems in the traditional nationalist perspective. Kapelle's study of the eleventh century in the north has shown that developments in the area cannot be understood except in the context of continuing resistance to southern rule (Norman or English). The use of the Norman Conquest as a control implies, furthermore, a correlation between numbers and influence that medievalists in the 1990s are increasingly unwilling to make. That is not to say, however, that comparisons and contrasts between the Norman Conquest and the other early medieval migrations are no longer being drawn. It provides, for instance, an important (and well-evidenced) example of the strategies adopted by one particular conquering elite in asserting and maintaining a dominant position in society, and the profound effects that this had upon culture. It can show also how, in the longer term, and in an increasingly literate culture, the historical record of migration could be evoked in the structuring of society. If a body of early medieval migration theory is to be formed, examples drawn from the Norman Conquest will necessarily play a prominent part in it, but the days in which it could be seen as a control for an elite settlement seem numbered.

Yorkshire and the Norman Conquest

From at least the late nineteenth century onwards, a distinct regional perspective on the Norman Conquest in Yorkshire is visible. Whereas in the South the main thrust of debate was to do with claims for the English or Norman origins of the characteristic forms of society and economy of the central middle ages - a typical continuity versus innovation debate - , in the North and especially in Yorkshire, all were agreed that the Norman Conquest had presaged the complete destruction and breakdown of the distinctive social, economic and cultural forms of the area. Yorkshire was treated effectively as an

abnormality, created by the harrying, which rendered all the normal points of the broader discussion irrelevant in discussing it. The county, just as for the English settlements and the Scandanavian settlement, could be seen as 'different'; this specialness, however, was not of a sort which could happily be incorporated within popular notions of county identity, for it was, in all important respects, negative. There was not even felt to be anything particularly special in that it had been Yorkshire that had been the focus for resistance to the Normans and hence had been assured of its destruction. Yorkshire had simply, by unhappy accident, been the area in which the Conqueror's coup de grace against the last lingering hopes of the English nation had fallen.

It is only in the last twenty years that this picture has been challenged. Kepelle's thesis placed events in the North in a context of separatism which the traditional nationalist tendency to see everything in the period as related to the ethnic oppositions of 'English' and 'Normans' had caused scholars to overlook. Indeed, though much of the alleged 'wasting' which was the former justification for seeing Yorkshire as different seems increasingly to be being explained away as the consequence of the circumstances of recording, belief in at least some degree of northern separation continues unabated.

Chapter 6: Discussion

What has been done

This thesis has examined the ways in which the three English early medieval migration episodes have been studied by historians, philologists, archaeologists and antiquarians from the Anglo-Saxon period itself to the present day. Chapter One set the development of thought on population movement by early medievalists in the wider context of migration study by other academic disciplines, and indicated some problems in studying migration which are unique to early medievalists. Chapter Two investigated in more depth the history of early medieval migration study, demonstrating the close links that existed between migrationism, 'Anglo-Saxonism' and nationalism. It was shown that the study of migration had increased dramatically in complexity at around the beginning of the twentieth century, with the emergence of a 'new' migration discourse (the Viking settlement), and the usage of a far wider range of types of evidence to throw light upon population movement. The high water mark for migrationist interpretations of English history came with the publication of Sir Frank Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*, which made use of all the new techniques for recognising and characterising population movement and gave the three migrations a central role as motors for change in early medieval England. In the later twentieth century, however, and as a result of the collapse of confidence in nationalist interpretations of early medieval history in the aftermath of the second world war, migration increasingly emerged as a problematical and divisive subject for early medievalists. Chapters Three to Five considered each of the migration discourses in turn, concentrating in particular on Yorkshire, a reasonably well-defined area with relatively long traditions of study of all three migration episodes. In each case the aim was to see how the results of different disciplines have been used to build up a coherent picture of events, and to establish how the different migration discourses have influenced each other.

In the rest of the current discussion, the various results of these preceding chapters will be brought together and analyzed, starting at the detailed level of the three case studies, and then broadening the canvas to consider the role and position of migration study in the

early mediaeval discourse, and its future. Finally, attention will be turned to early mediaeval studies as a whole and questions asked about the implications of what has been learnt for the way in which study is conducted in the future.

The Migration Discourses

In considering study of the three English migration episodes side-by-side, it is inevitable that parallels between them emerge. They have all, of course, shared the trends of the western intellectual climate in general and of English historical research in particular. Each migration discourse emerged from a Whiggish tradition of antiquarian research upon written records, that was concerned above all with the origins of the English people and English liberty, and for which the importance of population movement was self-evident. Each saw a vast expansion in the range of evidence used in its interpretation, and in the scope of its study throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, largely as a result of specialised disciplinary study within the universities. Finally, at some particular point in the post-war period, each has seen a drastic re-evaluation of its aims and methods, and persistent questioning of the relationship between migration and the cultural changes formerly attributed to it.

More specifically, each of the three discourses has, throughout its history, come under the influence of, and, in turn, influenced, the other two. This influence has taken a variety of forms, and, although frequent, has been *ad hoc*, unsystematic and extremely variable in its extent. Much of it is implicit and unquantifiable; the simple application of similar modes of thought to apparently similar problems. Thus, for instance, when study of the Viking settlement was developing, in the early years of the twentieth century, it was not totally *de novo* but lent heavily upon the experience of at least 350 years of continuous thought upon the English and Norman settlements, taking on all the main characteristics of those discourses. The mere fact of the traditional early medieval periodisation has, likewise, encouraged authors routinely to compare and characterise their three migrations with reference to one another.

Sometimes, however, and more frequently as the old maximalist interpretations of the

English and Danish settlements have been challenged, comparisons have become more explicit, and have been advocated as a means by which to judge specific aspects of the cultural record. This is the way in which the Norman Conquest has often been used; as a control, in which the numbers of migrants are known, and which can serve as a model of the effects which an élite settlement might be expected to have upon the record. This argument carries clear implications about the relationship of the disciplines. Written evidence, according to this, is to be regarded as preferred; other disciplines only have value inasmuch as they can be related to the written record. A more damaging flaw, however, is that it relies upon an assumption that these population movements are inherently comparable, and leave traces in the record in the same way. This belief is based, it would seem, largely upon the fact that they all occur in the 'Anglo-Saxon period', and have been studied by early medievalists. Attempts to relate the early medieval migrations to other British events, for example the Roman Conquest, are not unknown, but are far rarer than traditional comparison of the three episodes between 400 and 1066.¹ However, a strong case has been made (and is repeatedly corroborated in the case-studies here) that many factors contribute to the character of the record in migratory situations, of which the size and 'character' of population movement is but one. The others include, amongst others, the relations of 'natives' and 'incomers', the effects of changing land tenures, the degree of literacy and the length of chronological gap between population movement and the creation of the written record, and, last but not least, the degree and manner in which the idea of migration was used thereafter. Direct comparison between the records of different migrations as a guide to the nature of those migrations thus carries with it so many assumptions and possibilities for distortion that it must be regarded as redundant.

In any case, such thinking relies upon a false premise of the relationship of ethnicity and culture. According to traditional migrationist beliefs, this relationship is static and unchanging. The movement of people into an area will necessarily result in observable cultural change in that area. Therefore if one can judge correctly the scale of racial and cultural mixing as a result of a migration, one has understood the migration. A wealth of recent research, however, has shown both that early medieval ethnic and cultural identities

¹ See, for example, G. Fellows Jensen, "Conquests and the place-names of England, with special reference to the Viking settlements", in *Norna-Rapporter* 17, 192-210.

were far more flexible than was previously supposed, and that there is no reason to suppose that such identities will be regularly and recognizably reflected in culture, material or otherwise.² These ideas have already wreaked profound change in the Anglo-Saxon settlement discourse, and they now seem likely to do so for that on the Danish settlement. Where this has taken place, there has been a tendency to minimise the importance of migration in the explanation of cultural change in favour of other, normally internal, factors. In general, this has been a useful corrective, but in some cases it has been taken to extremes, denying any significance to migration whatsoever.

So far these conclusions have concentrated upon similarities in the three migration discourses, but chapters 3-5 have clearly demonstrated that, throughout their histories, they have differed, not just in the range of evidence used in their interpretation, and in the types of migration hypothesized, but also in the ways in which migration is studied, and in their receptiveness to new ideas. Although borrowing between the discourses has, as has been said, been frequent, this contact has not been systematic or regular enough to ensure that all new ideas or approaches to the subject have been transmitted to all of the discourses at the same rate. Although, as we have seen, they all follow basically the same path of methodological development, there have been strong and persistent differences between them which have greatly affected the rate and nature of their development. For instance, a more source-critical approach to written evidence and a revision of maximalist interpretations of settlement started to take place in the Scandinavian settlement discourse in the late 1950s, long before anything of the sort happened for the English settlements, perhaps because of the relative novelty of the maximalist interpretation of the Vikings. On the other hand, the Danish settlement discourse is only now embracing new thinking on ethnicity which has already been enormously influential in discussion of the English settlements for up to 15 years.

There are indubitably several reasons for this, but I would suggest that it is mainly a disciplinary question. The differing levels of involvement by specialists from different

² Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*, Geary, "Ethnic identity as a situational construct in the early middle ages", Amory, "The meaning and purpose of ethnic terminology in the Burgundian laws", Pohl, "Conceptions of ethnicity in early medieval studies", Reynolds, "What do we mean by "Anglo-Saxon" and "Anglo-Saxons"?".

disciplines in each migration discourse dictates both the character of that discourse, and its responsiveness to theoretical and methodological innovation. This in turn is dependent upon the dominant theoretical paradigms within each of the three disciplines involved; history, archaeology and linguistics.

Whilst historians and archaeologists have proved open to new thinking on ethnicity and the relevance of migrations, linguistics remains a stumbling block. Language change remains probably the most vexed and least understood of all the types of evidence relating to population movement.³ This is particularly frustrating, as linguistic evidence is an important feature of all three migration discourses, and for at least two of them (Danish and English) it is the largest remaining part of the old-fashioned migrationist case. Onomastics, the branch of linguistics most usually pressed into service with respect to migrations, remains dominated by a small and ageing clique, which has proved remarkably resistant to more modern thinking on the relationship of ethnicity and cultural (especially onomastic) change and which has persisted in applying numbers arguments to migrations.⁴ There have been some movements away from this point of view, particularly in work by John Hines, but it seems that there remains a necessity for renewed study along the lines of sociolinguistics.

Migration and Early Medieval Studies: the past and the future

Having considered the test-cases, the ways in which migration has been handled in early medieval studies as a whole is discussed, and some tentative suggestions about directions for future research are made.

In the past 50 years study of early medieval migrations has emerged from a lengthy period (over 1000 years) of quite remarkable theoretical stability. As the natural complement to the search for national origins, study of population movement had a practically unassailable position as a central concern of early medievalists so long as that search continued to be the main aim of the early medieval discourse. There had been, it must be said, substantial developments in the methods and evidence used to detect and

³ Reynolds, "What do we mean by "Anglo-Saxon"?", 401.

⁴ For instance, Gelling, "Why aren't we speaking Welsh?", 51.

interpret migrations since the nineteenth century, but this, if anything, had only re-affirmed belief in the importance of population movements to historical development and added further weight to arguments using them.

Since the 1940s, however, the nationalist conception of early medieval study has become subject to intensive re-evaluation; from those who have questioned the precocious unity of Anglo-Saxon England,⁵ from those who have pointed out that English history was merely a part of wider European developments,⁶ from many who have questioned the nature of ethnicity and nationalism in this period,⁷ and from historiographers who have shown how Germanist myths of the Anglo-Saxon period formed and prospered.⁸ Migration study, with its long history of association with the nationalist appropriation of the early medieval past, became a prime target for the revisionists. Concerted attacks upon migration as an explanation of cultural change came not just from historians, but, with especial vigour, from archaeologists who saw it as culturally tainted and out of keeping with the techno-environmental models of cultural change which were becoming increasingly fashionable in medieval archaeology in the 1970s.⁹

Since the collapse of the old consensus in the 1970s and 1980s, migration study has been thrown into confusion. There are a wide variety of views on the significance of population movement, from those who still cling to the notion that evidence of massive change is indicative of massive peasant settlement to those who believe that migrations are completely insignificant in cultural development.¹⁰ Many Anglo-Saxonists are reduced to perplexity, fence-sitting or the inevitable ‘middle path’ – a belief in a smaller settlement, but one which still had profound effects – when faced by the question of migration.

⁵ Wormald, “Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the origins of the *gens Anglorum*”, “The making of England”.

⁶ For example, S. Keynes, “Anglo-Saxon history after *Anglo-Saxon England*”, 93.

⁷ See Reynolds, “What do we mean...?”.

⁸ Hill, *op. cit.*, MacDougall, *op. cit.*

⁹ Hamerow, “Migration theory and the migration period”, 165-6.

¹⁰ For such views, see respectively, Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England* and Lucy, *ASCEY*.

How, then, is population movement to be addressed? Must it be totally abandoned, or is it possible to reformulate the questions which are asked of it? Can there be a continuing role for questions of numbers?

I would contend that there is a continuing need for study of migration. There is abundant evidence for change in the records of the 5th-7th, 9th-10th and 11th-13th centuries which cannot be explained except in the context of population movement. However it is impossible to sustain the case that the size and nature (elite or peasant) of migrations can be discerned directly through their effects upon the archeological or linguistic record, nor can it be assumed that the size and nature of population movements are necessarily the most important factors in determining their cultural outcomes.

Instead it may be more productive to look at the ways in which culture; material, written and linguistic, is manipulated in the structuring and constitution of society. There is a wealth of linguistic and material evidence available for both the Anglo-Saxon and Viking settlements with which to engage in this sort of study, yet only the most tentative steps have so far been taken to use it in this way, particularly in the Scandinavian settlement discourse. Much work remains to be done.

Early Medieval Study

The past forty years have been ones of considerable readjustment for early medieval study. They have seen the collapse of a theoretical paradigm of great strength and exceptional duration; the nationalist search for English origins, and its partial replacement by a range of alternative conception of the means and reasons for studying the early medieval past.

Nationalist histories of the 'Anglo-Saxons' were initiated amidst a prevailing insecurity of identity by the 'Anglo-Norman' historians (as they are perhaps rather misleadingly conventionally called); although they built upon the legacy of Bede, it was only in the twelfth century that the construction of the Anglo-Saxon period (although that name was not used of it until later) began. It was these written nationalist narratives that formed the basis for all future thought about the period; from the 'rebirth of Anglo-Saxon studies' in

the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the racial interpretations of the Oxford School in the nineteenth century to Stenton in the twentieth. The paradigm not only provided 'Anglo-Saxonism' with a purpose but also a shape; the period it covered, its insularity, its obsession with migration, and the over-riding patriotic faith in the written records of the doings of heroic English forefathers.

From the late nineteenth century onwards Anglo-Saxon study developed rapidly, moving in to the universities, and seeing the availability of a wide range of new types of evidence; narrative evidence was joined by a well-organized body of legal documents and charters, as well as archaeology, linguistic and toponymic data. The basic structure of the nationalist Anglo-Saxon discourse was retained, but the main body of documentary historians of the Anglo-Saxons was supplemented by new specialists in the 'auxiliary' disciplines of archaeology and onomastics. This vastly increased the data set available, and made possible an epic work on the scale of Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*, the definitive statement of the traditional nationalist paradigm in its most developed and advanced form.

It was, however, the increased data set that undermined the traditional means by which early medieval study had been conducted. Intensive study of the written evidence, combined with increasing archaeological data, showed that aspects of the traditional nationalistic outlook must be suspect. It was, however, the post-war and post-imperial retreat from nationalism that brought about some of the most sustained criticism of the old consensus. Starting in the 1950s, and gathering pace throughout the 60s and 70s, changes on a number of fronts brought about a radical transformation of the early medieval discourse; the rise of independent archaeology and continuing source criticism upset the centuries-old dominance of the written record, certainly for the earlier parts of the period, and encouraged the growth of interdisciplinary approaches, contact with and knowledge of Continental research demonstrated that England was not the insular prodigy it had been supposed and that it should be placed firmly in the context of general European developments, and the nationalist bias of earlier work was recognised by researchers increasingly concerned with the context and subjectivity of their own activity.

Collectively, all of this work has amounted to an attempt to shift the emphasis of the discipline away from its ancient orientation. It has undoubtedly been successful, at least in

part; nationalist bias is more generally recognised, and steps taken to question and counteract it. The old concentration upon the divine destiny of the English to be a nation and achieve liberal institutions has been almost entirely extirpated from serious scholarly work. Equally there has been a drastic change in the methodological balance of the discipline, with a recognition that written evidence is not, of necessity, the best and most trustworthy available.

Nevertheless, many of the trappings of the old early medieval discourse still persist; relatively rigid disciplinary division, for instance, and the poverty of interdisciplinary communication, or the very notion of an Anglo-Saxon period itself.¹¹ Moreover, there are still dinosaurs roaming the early medieval jungle, applying, unchanged, arguments from forty or fifty years ago.¹² Nor has change been accomplished entirely easily; few seismic paradigmatic shifts are. It has lent a whole new edge to the interdisciplinary squabbles which have, admittedly, existed for as long as there has been disciplinary study. Each discipline has reacted at different rates and in different ways to changes in thinking and the general theoretical revolution. Archaeologist has been set against historian and historian against linguist.¹³ A hardening of attitudes along disciplinary lines threatens to tear the discourse further apart.

This thesis has shown how thought on migration has been one of the, if not the,

¹¹ It is notable, however, that Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England* will be replaced in the *Oxford History of England* series by not one but two volumes.

¹² The prime example of this is J.N.L. Myres's book *The English Settlements* (1986), which blithely re-stated his arguments from the classic Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* of 1936 with little or no acknowledgement of the enormous amount of research and thought which had taken place in the intervening period. Another standard textbook series in need of urgent revision is the Pelican history of England, the 'Anglo-Saxons' volume of which was written by Dorothy Whitelock in the 1940s. Perhaps another work to be brought to special attention is H. Loyn's *The Vikings in Britain* (1994), which is, in large measure, a reissue of a book published in 1977, and which completely ignores most of the work that has been done since on the issue. The trend towards increased publication has not necessarily fostered the development of new thinking in English early medieval studies.

¹³ See Hodges, *Anglo-Saxon Achievement*, 4-9, T.S.A. Saunders, *Marxism and Archaeology: The Origins of Feudalism in Early Medieval England* (unpub. D.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1991). On hostility between historians and linguists, see Sawyer, "The Two Viking Ages of Britain: A Discussion", 169, and K. Cameron, "Linguistic and Place-Name Evidence", 176-179.

principal battleground in the ongoing struggle to modernise the early medieval discourse. Its close association with the old ways of thought ensured it that role. In the process population movement has become a deeply vexed and contentious issue. Nevertheless, there is a future for migration study, as for early medieval study as a whole. It emerges, not as an historical given or an observed orthodoxy, but as a subject for continuing research.

Abbreviations

ASCEY = S.J.Lucy, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire* (unpub. Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1995)

ASSAH = *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*

BAR = British Archaeological Reports

BSASY = M.L.Faull, *British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire* (unpub. Ph.D thesis, University of Leeds, 1979)

DB = *Domesday Book*

DEB = Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae et Conquestu*

EHR = *English Historical Review*

Med Arch = *Medieval Archaeology*

TRHS = *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

YAJ = *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*

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